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# BONAPARTISM

SIX LECTURES

DELIVERED IN THE UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

BY

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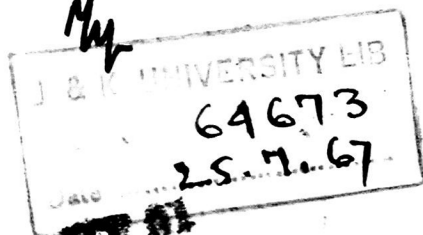
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## PREFACE

LAST December the University of London honoured me with an invitation to give a short course of lectures upon a subject connected with my special studies. The lectures were delivered in University College during the month of June, and, in accordance with the desire of the University, are now given to the public.

I make no apologies for my choice of a subject, though to some an essay upon both the First and the Second Empire may seem to be lacking in the essential quality of dramatic unity. But though divided from one another by more than a generation, these two Bonapartist Governments were to a large extent inspired by the same principles, rested upon the support of the same intellectual and social forces, appealed to the same appetites, flattered the same vanities, and shared in the same kind of ruin. In the interval of French history filled up by the two Bourbon dynasties and the second Republic, Bonapartist

ideals were not entirely extinguished. The wounds received on the field of Waterloo were dangerous but not mortal. The party revived with some aspects of its creed transfigured and adapted to the new political environment, and if in the process of recovery or survival mythology played no little part, the story is all the more instructive to the student of human weakness and superstition. In foreign affairs, again, there is a strong bond of continuity between the policy, or rather between the results of the policy, pursued by the uncle and the nephew. The German Empire and the Italian Kingdom are the results, not indeed alone of their conscious efforts, but of a sum of tendencies, of which the greater and more conspicuous part was either the designed or the undesigned effect of their joint action. The Italian *Risorgimento* begins with the wonderful year of battles when the young Bonaparte, leading the tattered army of the French democracy, drove the Austrians out of Milan, and set up his Cisalpine Republic in the teeming and indolent plain of Lombardy. Its work was accomplished in 1870, when the French garrison was withdrawn from Rome under the pressure of a German invasion of France. That invasion in turn

was the climax of many converging movements, political, social, intellectual, upon which the shock administered by Napoleon I to the archaic fabric of the German Empire acted with a decisive and liberating power. The triumph of Bismarck was rendered possible not only by the fierce envy of the Boulevards for the Prussian glory on the field of Sadowa, nor yet by the indiscretions of Benedetti or of Gramont, but by a certain brilliant simplification of German political geography carried out under the Consulate by Talleyrand as a consequence of the victories of Marengo and Hohenlinden, which had restored French supremacy in the valley of the Po, and brought the French boundary to the waters of the Rhine. Nor is it without ironical significance that the *annus mirabilis* of modern history which witnessed the completion of German and Italian unity, the destruction of Bonapartism and the humiliation of France, was marked by the sessions of the Vatican Council. The decree of Papal Infallibility was the cordial which the Roman Church administered to itself in the hour of defeat, its defiance of the modern world, its protest against the sacrilege of Italian patriotism. It was the culmination of a quarrel old at least as the days of Luther and, so far as France was concerned, made bitter

and almost irreparable by the work of the Constituent Assembly ; and among many other seeds of division it contained the fatal germ which was destined to dissolve the Napoleonic Concordat.

H. A. L. FISHER.

*Nov. 1st, 1907*



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# BONAPARTISM

## I

THERE is no mystery about the origins of Bonapartism. It is the child of Napoleon Bonaparte and the French Revolution, deriving its force and vitality not only from the genius of the greatest soldier and administrator of history, but also from the passions and achievements of the most tempestuous decade of French annals. Bonaparte came, as he said, 'to close the Romance of the Revolution', to heal the wounds, to correct the extravagances, to secure the conquests. It was his boast that he did not belong to the race of the 'ideologues', that he saw facts through plain glass, and that he came to substitute an age of work for an age of talk. The Revolution had ended in the violent and irregular tyranny of a faction ; he would create a methodical government based upon popular consent, and conceived in the interests not of any particular faction but of France as a whole. He would restore peace and confidence, build up commercial credit, retrieve military prestige, and

mend the educational machine which had been broken in the torment.

The forces which he directed and the conditions under which he worked were determined by the Revolution. That great movement, beginning as a protest against privilege, aristocracy, and obscurantism, had with many crimes and much devotion refashioned France. Its inspiring ideas had been liberty, equality, popular sovereignty, and the general conception that there were certain natural and indestructible rights of man which it was the mission of France not only to fix and secure in her own institutions, but also to spread throughout Europe. It had, in other words, not only been a revolt against the old order in France, the feudal system, the monarchy, the corporations, but it had also assumed the character of a war of propaganda, a war for the acquisition of natural frontiers, for the propagation of natural rights. Almost from the very first French democracy, in spite of pacific professions, was associated with war. Mirabeau, who wished for peace, saw clearly that the rosy prospects of '89 idealism were unlikely to be realized, and informed a deputation of Quakers that it was a civic duty to bear arms in defence of one's country. The armies of the Revolution were animated by

ambitions old and new, ambitions for the Rhine frontier, ambitions for the destruction of monarchy and feudalism. The tree of liberty was the symbol of their progress. Free promotion, limitless horizons of plunder and advancement, the sense that a great epoch in the world's history had been reached, gave exhilaration to their spirits. From countless memoirs and private letters we can see with the eye of faith these armies of the Revolution as they rollick along singing the 'Marseillaise,' lighting their pipes at the altar candles, looting the homes of the vanquished peoples, and making manifest in their victorious progress the sentiments and principles of the first republic in Europe. All through the nineteenth century there has been a military side to the French democratic tradition.

It is one of the commonplaces of history that the passion for equality is stronger in France than the love of liberty. Liberty involves taking trouble; and any large delegation of political liberties imposes a burden which in default of tradition, training, or the spirit of self-sacrifice, individuals or communities may be unwilling to bear. Equality, on the other hand, is so closely connected both with the democratic passion of envy and with the philosophic notion

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of distributive justice, and the principles of equality were so glaringly violated by the social contrivances of the Ancien Régime, that it became at once and has ever since remained the cardinal axiom of the Revolution. Wherever the principle of liberty conflicts with that of equality, it is the principle of liberty which has to yield. Nevertheless it is well to recognize that, whatever may have been the revolutionary practice, a considerable space was given to civil and political liberty in revolutionary theory. Arbitrary imprisonment was abolished; public trial was decreed; the jury of accusation and the jury of judgement were introduced for the first time to a nation which had been habituated to a secret and tyrannical procedure copied from the Inquisition. A law passed in 1790 declared *la liberté de travail*, a measure as fatal to the revival of the tyranny of the mediaeval guild as it is to that of the modern trade union; and the abolition of caste in the realm of economics was accompanied by an equal measure of liberty in the sphere of conscience. To the Roman doctrine of authority and persecution the Revolution replied that man was free to believe what he chose about God and the universe.

Political freedom, if it is to be real, depends upon the capacity and inclination to exert political rights. The Constitution of 1791, the first Constitution of the French Revolution, made profuse grants of political freedom. The whole government of the country was placed in the control of popularly-elected bodies. Even the bishops and the judges were to be elected. The framers of this constitution asked too much of the French citizen, who was unversed in politics, often illiterate, and in any case unable to spare the time required for the adequate discharge of the functions imposed upon him. The management of local and general politics soon fell into the hands of the professional politicians of the clubs; and as the violence and bitterness of the Revolution increased, the number of men who cared to take part in public affairs steadily diminished. Freedom and terrorism are antagonistic terms; and at no period of French history has civil courage been at a lower ebb than during the ten years in which the mouths of professional politicians were full of the large word of Liberty. There were other causes at work hostile to the growth of freedom. Of these perhaps the two most important were the absence of a wholesome spirit of local autonomy in the Ancien Régime,

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and the hostility of the Revolution to all forms of corporate life.

De Tocqueville has explained in his famous book that the centralization of modern France dates back to the Ancien Régime. Then indeed the centralization was unscientific, impeded by the privileges of the Church, the nobility, and the parliaments; but nevertheless, despite all its many technical imperfections, destructive of local effort, save in those few provinces which by reason of their historic assemblies or estates were known as *pays d'États*. The evils attendant upon such a system were visible to discerning eyes, and in the reign of Louis XVI some attempt was made to devolve responsibility upon local bodies. It is open to argument that if in 1776 the King had accepted Turgot's plan of devolution, France might have been spared the great catastrophe. But the opportunity was not seized, or rather it was seized too late. The Revolution overtook the country before the provincial assemblies had got into full working order, and when once the revolutionary passions had been unloosed local government became impossible. The aristocracy was driven from France, and it is difficult to work a system of local government without the governing classes. The prestige of



Paris, the long habit of deference to the agents of a centralized administration, combined with the pressure of foreign war, but hastened a reversion to the tradition which had been temporarily snapped, and in the *Députés en mission* and the Committee of Public Safety we can trace the process by which the central authority of the State recovered its tyranny. Nothing is more remarkable than the passive acquiescence with which the provinces received the dictates of Paris. The Girondins had filled France with their eloquence, had made the war, and shaken down the throne; when they felt power slipping from them in Paris they appealed to the provinces, and what was the response? There was hardly an echo in answer to their call. Every year of disturbance made it clearer that the policy of devolution recommended by Turgot and carried out with modifications by Necker and Brienne was impracticable in the altered condition of France. There was scarcely a village in the country—save perhaps in the royalist districts of the west—in which society had not been torn to pieces by angry faction. Those rents were slow to heal. The reports which flowed in to Napoleon from the provinces in 1800 showed clearly that the machinery of local government had broken down.

and that there was no class sufficiently impartial, instructed, and public-spirited to restore its efficiency.

The hostility of the Revolution to corporate life is to be explained partly on theoretical and partly on historical grounds. Theoretically a corporation is not a person ; and it was part of the Revolutionary creed to substitute natural for artificial relations. Then there was a feeling that corporations limited individual liberty. The guilds limited the liberty of an individual to take up a craft suited to his capacity ; the Church limited the liberty of the priest or nun to marry ; and the lands which passed into the dead hand of the Church were withdrawn from free commercial circulation. Further, the existence of industrial or religious corporations circumscribed the liberty of the State, and therefore the liberty of the individuals, whose collective will was embodied in the resolutions of the central government. 'It ought no doubt' (so runs a passage from a law passed in June, 1791) 'to be permitted to all citizens to assemble, but citizens of certain professions ought not to be allowed to assemble for their pretended common interests. There is no longer any corporation in the State. There is only the particular interest of each

individual and the general interest. No one is permitted to inspire into citizens an intermediary interest, to separate them from the public interest by a corporate spirit.' The State, that is to say, was conceived as a mass of isolated, free, homogeneous units, each unit a citizen, each citizen an ultimate source of sovereign authority, the exercise of which would be fatally impeded by artificial groups. But whatever strength may be attached to these theoretical conceptions, we can hardly doubt that the most important influence was of a practical nature. The advocates of revolutionary reform rightly saw that the great corporations, the Parliament, the Church, the guilds, represented vested interests which were at variance with the general scheme of revolutionary policy. In particular the position of the Church challenged attack. It possessed vast wealth, in return for which it made an altogether inadequate contribution to the State. Not only had it failed to contrive an equitable distribution of its resources among its own members, but it had inverted the most elementary rules of distributive justice. The hard work of the parish was done at a starvation wage, while the cities were crowded with fashionable idlers drawing handsome salaries from ecclesiastical sinecures. Then

there were the charges for which Voltaire's incessant and brilliant raillery had secured a general credence, charges of privilege, intolerance, and obscurantism. There were memories of the murdered Calas, of the opposition to the grants of civil rights to Protestants, of great books burned under clerical influence by the Parliament of Paris. It was determined to bridle a power the hostility of which was clearly apprehended ; and the attack on the corporations was quickened by financial need. The Revolutionary State, which desired to govern all things on its new plan, was on the verge of bankruptcy ; and it was essential to discover fresh and elastic sources of revenue. The lands of the Church presented the first and most obvious expedient to the embarrassed financiers of the Constituent Assembly ; then followed the property of charitable corporations, hospitals and the like. The State undertook to pay the clergy and to subsidize the hospitals from its own funds. By so doing it would extend its control and diminish the chances of an insidious clerical attack upon the principles of democracy.

The attack upon the corporations produced somewhat unexpected results in the industrial sphere. It was decreed in March, 1791, that

any workman could enter any trade and work either at home or in workshops either for himself or for an employer. This law for the first time introduced into France the principle of free industrial competition, without, however, the accompaniment of any of the safeguards which free competition necessitates. The feeling of the Revolution was adverse both to the right of public meeting and to the right of workmen's combinations for the purpose of raising wages, and this aversion to the free grouping of men in industrial unions was intensified by the excesses of the revolutionary societies. The Jacobin Club was a warning which neither Napoleon nor the governments which succeeded him have ever felt themselves strong enough to neglect. It was held in France that the right of association must be closely controlled by the State, and even so strong a socialist as Proudhon was a systematic opponent of the legalization of collective bargaining. The right of public meeting was deemed to be inconsistent with order, the right of using collective pressure upon individual workmen was deemed to be inconsistent with liberty.

The principle of equality was realized by the destruction of feudal rights and privileges, the



abolition of tithes, the submission of all members of the State to a common scheme of justice and taxation. Primogeniture and entails went the way of tithes and feudal dues, and the liberty of bequest was almost abolished with a view to securing an equal partition of the inheritance. All the picturesque inequalities of the Ancien Régime were swept away, speedily, ruthlessly, effectually ; so effectually that even now an orator addressing a political meeting may find himself forced to apologize for an inadvertent use of the word *Messieurs*. But to this rule there was one significant exception. By a law passed in August, 1790, the Courts were forbidden 'to interfere in any manner with the operations of administrative bodies', or 'to take cognizance of any manner of administrative acts'. The agents of the government were protected by a peculiar kind of privilege. They could not be sued in a law court for any action relating to their official duties ; nor could any matter affecting the administration be made the subject of a public inquiry. The government was thus both judge and party in any case which might arise out of the wrongful action of one of its agents. An official could only be called to account with the authorization of his official superior and before

a tribunal which sat in secret and was itself composed of government officials.

The causes which led the revolutionary assemblies to adopt a rule, apparently so repugnant to the most elementary conceptions of liberty and equality, were grounded partly on inherited tradition, partly on considerations of acute practical need, and partly on a fashionable theory of government. The belief that political salvation was to be found in a clear distinction between executive, legislative, and judicial functions was common to all the men of the Revolution, and it seemed to be a corollary of the sacred principle that the law courts should not meddle with political machinery. But here, as in so many other quarters, the theory of the Revolution was efficacious because it represented not only the urgent needs of the present, but a mass of accumulated instinct, the inheritance of centuries of secretive and centralized despotism. It was an ancient maxim of the monarchy that the servants of the Crown should be shielded from the intrusive criticism of the law courts, because the King was above the common law, because his accounts must not be divulged, because he was specially interested in the doings of his own agents. The point had been debated hotly in

the seventeenth century, and the exemption of the administration from judicial control was one of the constant points in the various and versatile programmes of the Fronde. But though in 1648 the Parliament of Paris won a victory for Justice, the effects were speedily obliterated by the recovery of the Crown. From the days of Richelieu to the outbreak of the Revolution it was an unquestioned principle of French government that administrative causes were reserved to the judgement of the royal intendant and the royal council. Even the Parliament of Paris, which during the eighteenth century called in question so many points of the royal prerogative, never protested against this most dangerous immunity of the servants of the Crown. To this long-standing tradition of government there was added during the Revolution a passionate sense of the omnipotence of the State. It was felt that the public service must always override private interest; that if a question arose with regard to a government contract, or a tax, or liability to military service, or the administration of roads, canals, and other public works, it was a matter upon which the administration itself should have the deciding voice; and this feeling was intensified by the stress of war. The anxieties of



national defence made it seem supremely important to obviate any friction which might impede the swift propulsion of the government works. If we think of the long train of wagons, of the canteens and tents, and all the million details which go to the equipment of an army in the field; if we remember that a whole nation was up in arms, that the frontier of France from Bayonne to Dunkirk was in defence; and if we then reflect that all the gigantic economic supply needed for the support of these armies was based upon a series of contracts any one of which might be the subject of litigation, we shall be able to appreciate the position taken up by the French Government—that all questions arising out of army contracts should be referred to army officials. The individual citizen might suffer injustice; but the great machine of the Republic moved on.

The principle of popular sovereignty, of government founded on the general will, was the cardinal point in Rousseau's philosophy of the State, and was unquestioned by the men who drafted the Constitutions of the Revolution. From the first moment, however, the principle received an application which led to a profound divergence between the parliamentary history

of England and France. Influenced partly by a distrust of the Crown, partly by the analogy of America, and partly by the great reputation of Montesquieu, who in a famous passage declared that the secret of English liberty consisted in the separation of the executive, legislative, and judicial functions, the Constituent Assembly determined that the ministers of the Crown were to be excluded from the Legislature. The protests of Mirabeau, one of the few men who understood the workings of the English system, were overborne, and the separation of the executive and legislative functions has remained a governing political conception in the mind of France. The head of the executive was deemed to be a representative of the general will, no less than the Assembly which was elected to pass the laws; and by a curious revenge of history an immense power was conferred upon him by the very forces which began by dislocating the whole administrative machine. It cannot be too frequently remembered that the power of generalization in politics is a source both of weakness and of strength to those who make the generalizations. The men who move the world must think in large categories; but to think in large categories does not of itself move

anything. The men of imagination who frame laws in general terms must be assisted by the men of routine whose experience enables them to translate the law into a working regulation. In England the two functions are combined. In France, ever since the Revolution, they have been kept apart.<sup>1</sup> An English law is full of concrete detail, and may not even contain any explicit statement of the principle upon which it is based. A French law is abstract in form, a declaration of general principles rather than of particular precepts, and this tradition, springing from that peculiar constitution of revolutionary statesmanship which made it so destructive of existing institutions, that is to say, its belief in the infinite capacity of homogeneous human nature to be ameliorated by abstract ideas, has immensely strengthened the executive at the expense of the legislature. The reason is obvious. It is the function of the executive to fill in by decrees and regulations the sketchy outlines of the law. A large sphere of action, which under the English system belongs to Parliament, under the French system belongs to the bureaucracy. Besides the

<sup>1</sup> 'Le règlement n'est qu'une application particulière de la loi; la loi est la règle générale faite par ceux qui ont le droit et le pouvoir.'—Cambacérès, *Éclaircissements*, quoted by Vandal, *L'Avènement de Bonaparte*. Vol. II. p. 167.

body of law derived from the parliamentary source, there is another body of law equally important which is derived from the administration, enforced by the administration, interpreted by the administration. In theory the doctrine of popular sovereignty is upheld ; but the control of the legislature is necessarily diminished. No one who examines the history of the relations between the Convention and the Committee of Public Safety, and those between the Legislature and the Directory, can fail to be impressed by the fact, that during the last six years of the Revolution there was a steady tendency to strengthen the independence and enlarge the sphere of the executive.

A less surprising but even more important feature of the Revolution is its attitude towards private property. The Revolution was strongly and consistently individualistic. Socialist theory had played no part in its preparation, and socialist theories played no part in its scheme of reconstruction. All the statesmen of the Revolution thought it necessary to emphasize their adhesion to that article in the Declaration of Rights which declares that property is an inviolable and sacred right, and when in 1796 a socialist movement made itself apparent in Paris, it was promptly

and ruthlessly crushed. The reasons which gave to the Revolution this conservative and reassuring quality were three in number. In the first place, the holders of property in France were numerous. Whereas the agrarian history of England during the eighteenth century may be summed up in the phrase 'elimination of the yeomanry', the course of events in France had been exactly the opposite. Here there was a large and a steadily increasing body of free peasant proprietors; and side by side with this free peasantry a great mass of peasant holdings, burdened by feudal dues and tithes, but in all other respects similar to the free properties. There was in fact in the country a large peasant proprietary, whose interests were passionately bound up with the ownership of the soil. Nor were the conditions so favourable to the growth of socialistic ideas in the towns as they afterwards became. Socialism is the medicine which suggests itself when other remedies have failed; when there is a marked divorce between capital and labour; when the economic pressure upon the workmen becomes too severe to be borne, and when the relation between the efforts put out and the rewards received seems to be the product of a wicked and envious caprice. The French

industrial system had not in 1789 been developed to the point at which the common ownership of the means of production appears as a natural and hopeful expedient. The factory system was inchoate; the organization of industry trammelled by mediaeval restrictions; the banking system was in a rudimentary stage of development; while the communication of ideas was restricted by the absence of a cheap press, and by a singular lack of mobility. A third reason for the individualistic tendency of the Revolution is the fact that the men who wielded political power belonged to the property-holding classes. M. Jaurès, the eloquent leader of the socialistic wing in the present Chamber of Deputies, attacks the Convention as a bourgeois assembly, and a study of the composition of the assemblies of the Revolution reveals the fact that they were composed for the most part of professional men, lawyers, doctors, teachers, men of the middle class, consumed with envy of the nobility but filled with a prosaic passion for rents and dividends. But even had this been otherwise, it would have been clear that the institution of private property had not yet received the improvements of which it was capable. The amendment of the law of succession, the abolition

of feudal rights and entails, and the destruction of the old industrial fetters, were changes sufficiently sweeping for one generation to accomplish ; and while respectable men found in such reforms as these the promise of a golden age, the collapse of the administration opened matchless prospects of irregular plunder to the predatory class. Men are not at pains to reconstruct the basis of society if they think that they can get justice without it ; and if there were no punishment for burglary, what thief would clamour for 'common goods' ? All this, however, was consistent with a steady growth of what is now called State Socialism. In the stress of war the free-trade theories of the physiocrats, which had resulted in the liberal tariff of 1791, were abandoned, and the State reverted to the old doctrine of protection which has continued, save for a spell of thirty-two years, to dominate the French fiscal system. The price of articles of consumption was fixed by law, and the functions of education were taken over by the State. A comparison of the Constitution of 1791, with its large concessions to local liberty, its rage for popular election, its suspicion of executive strength, with the practice and doctrine which prevailed under Robespierre and under the Directory, is an

illuminating commentary upon the way in which the logic of history or the wickedness of man perverted an ideal of individual liberty into a cowed and spiritless acceptance of collective control.

The effervescence of all these new ideas and principles in a society which retained many mediaeval characteristics caused the great French civil war. The old France believed in the monarchy, the aristocracy, the Church; the new France believed in equality and Voltaire. The old France was composed of men belonging to every rank and station in life, from the frivolous noble who loitered in the corridors of Versailles, to the busy husbandman who drove his plough across the stiff clay of Poitou or the sandy wastes of Brittany. It contained staunch, heroic, uncompromising loyalists like La Roche Jacquelin, wise moderates of the middle class like Malouet, and innumerable simple and pious souls, who, rather than take the sacrament from a priest who had compounded with the enemy, would follow their proscribed shepherd into the woods and wastes and brave the anger of a government which rarely practised the virtue of clemency. The new France numbered some devout Catholics, but saw in the priests who refused to accept the Civil Constitution of the clergy the friends of the



foreigner and the enemies of the State. By the end of the Revolution the list of *émigrés* amounted to 145,000 ; and to these must be added some 300,000 relatives and friends, who by reason of their aristocratic connexions were deprived of all political rights, and subjected to police supervision. When we consider that in addition half the priesthood of France were in rebellion against the ecclesiastical regulations of the State, and that among the number who had been driven across the frontier were politicians like Lafayette and Mallet du Pan, writers like Chateaubriand, generals like Dumouriez, we can calculate the loss which France would have sustained had she been unable to recover the loyal service of any part of this great Conservative connexion. The loss cannot be measured by an estimate of the quality displayed by the *émigrés* of Coblenz. Those *émigrés* were a body of which the country was well quit ; but they constituted a small fraction of the great mass of men whose leaning was rather towards a monarchy than a republic.

It was Napoleon's function in history to fuse the old France with the new. In the miraculous Italian campaigns, which first brought him reputation, he learned to vanquish armies, to carve and fashion states, to draw up constitutions, to treat

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with foreign powers, to study the psychology of nations. The very clearness of his conception of the chasm which divided the old world from the new saved him from the phantasms of the doctrinaires. He saw in Italy a people indolent, gifted, unwarlike, devoid of the serious spirit in affairs, debased by centuries of servitude, and he judged her to be unfit for liberty. The illusion of republican optimism, if he ever possessed it, was dissipated by the contact with reality. He reported the Venetians to be unprincipled, cowardly, untrained for freedom. 'You little know these people,' he wrote to Talleyrand of the Italians. 'They do not deserve to have forty thousand French killed for them. I see by your letters that you are always starting from a false hypothesis. You imagine that a superstitious, cowardly, pantaloon people can be made to do great things by Liberty. In four or five years Italy may have some passable troops, especially if they employ the Swiss, for it would want a very able legislator to give them the taste for arms. It is a very enervated and a very cowardly nation. Since I have been in Italy I have not been helped by the love of the people for liberty and equality, or at least it has been a very feeble auxiliary; but the good discipline

of our army, the respect we have always had for religion, which has carried me even to the point of cajoling its ministers, justice, and a great activity and promptitude in repressing malcontents and punishing declared opponents, such have been the real auxiliaries of the Army of Italy. These are the facts. What has been said in proclamations and printed speeches is romance.' A great opportunist, Napoleon was not the man to shape his course by the compass of revolutionary dogmatism. He found it convenient to spare the Piedmontese Monarchy, though the Directory had sworn enmity to crowned heads ; to partition the Venetian Republic, to treat with Naples and with the Pope. For sentimental philosophies, for the policy of unselfish propaganda, he showed virile and cynical contempt. 'Never,' he wrote to the Directors, 'has the French Republic adopted the principle of making war in the interests of other people. I should like to know on what principle of philosophy or morals 40,000 Frenchmen ought to be sacrificed against the clear wish of the nation and the obvious interests of the Republic. I know that it costs nothing to a handful of talkers to wish for a universal republic. I should like those gentlemen to come and make a winter campaign' ; and again, 'It is the

soldier who founds a republic and it is the soldier who maintains it.' If then he establishes republics in Northern Italy it is to be clearly understood not only that the republican constitutions are to be shaped and controlled by France, but that the republics are not to be exploited in the interests of an intolerant radical faction. The union of all classes appeared to him to be one of the aims of wise statesmanship, and a result only likely to be obtained where liberty was strictly curbed. 'To exclude all the nobles from public functions,' he wrote to the Provisional Government of the Ligurian Republic, 'would be a revolting injustice', and the comprehensive policy which he prescribed to Genoa was destined to govern his career in France. Indeed his contempt for the constitutions of Republican France grew with his experience and his appetite for command. 'In spite of our pride,' he wrote to Talleyrand, 'our thousand and one brochures, our blind, loquacious harangues, we are very ignorant in the science of political morality. The government ought to be considered as the true representative of the nation. It should rule according to a constitutional charter and organic laws. If the legislative power were charged not with action but with supervision, were impassive,

without rank in the Republic, without eyes or ears for what is going on around, it would have no ambition and would not inundate us with thousands of haphazard, absurd, self-annulling laws, with the result that we are a lawless nation in spite of three hundred folios of statute.' He had begun dimly to adumbrate the doctrine of the strong executive founded upon the *plébiscite* which was to be the pillar of Bonapartism ; and had come to the conclusion that legislative assemblies should be merely supervisory, that they should have no power to change the constitution or to interfere with the executive. His thought too had developed in the matter of religion. He discerned it to be a force which it was politic to harness and drive. 'It is not enough,' he wrote to the Republican Government of Genoa, 'to refrain from attacking religion, you must go further and provide no reason why the most timorous conscience should feel disquietude.' On another occasion he said that superstition was more powerful than liberty, and that the sovereignty of the people and freedom was the political code of the Gospel. On August 3, 1797, he wrote a letter to the Pope asking for a bull which should instruct the priests to preach obedience to the Government, and suggested that



measures might be taken which should reconcile the constitutional priests in France, and recall the majority of the French people to the principles of religion. Two grand features in his administration, the Constitution and the Concordat, were already taking shape in his mind.

But his eye was not fixed on France alone. He learned all the pieces on the diplomatic chess-board, discovered the weakness of Imperial Austria and the brittle fabric of the Italian states. The treaty which he concluded at the end of the war at Campo-Formio, secured for France the Rhine frontier and the control of the Cisalpine Republic, and prepared the way for a reconstruction of Germany. Ancona and the Ionian Islands, stepping-stones to the magical East, whose appeal had already begun to work on Bonaparte's imagination, were left in French hands. 'The isles of Corfu, Zante, and Cephalonia,' he wrote August 16, 1797, 'interest us more nearly than the whole of Italy. . . . The Empire of the Turks is crumbling: the possession of these isles will enable us to support it, as long as support will be possible, or to take our share in the spoil.' 'With Malta,' which as he points out might easily be seized, 'and Corfu, France would be mistress of the Mediterranean.' Then it would

be necessary to take Egypt, 'a country which has never belonged to a European nation.' 'With armies like ours,' he proceeds, 'for whom all religions are equal, Mahomedans, Copts, Arabs, idolaters, &c., all that is quite indifferent to us. We shall respect them all alike.' Endless possibilities of romantic conquest revealed themselves to this young general who in a breathless succession of triumphs had brought the stiff, old-fashioned Hapsburg Empire to its knees. He was no longer content with the well-worn frame on which Fleury and Chauvelin had embroidered their political designs. From Paris, in whose cynical atmosphere great reputations withered, his mind turned to the spacious East. As he had emulated Charlemagne in Italy, so he would rival the exploits of Alexander in Egypt. Here was the key which would unlock the dominion of India; the starting-point from which Syria might be invaded, and the Ottoman Empire brought down about its tottering foundations; here too was the vulnerable spot in England's armour. His mind was filled with dreams and realities. Yet the Egyptian expedition, doomed as it was to fail owing to the lack of naval control, did not prove disastrous to his fortunes. France, condemned by reason of the absence of her supreme

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general to experience a succession of stunning reverses, followed with eager eyes the romantic course of the army of Egypt. She learned of the Mamelukes vanquished in a brilliant charge by the Pyramids, of a French government established in Cairo, of Bible readings under the stars in the holy places of Palestine; of a Turkish army routed at Aboukir. The battle of the Nile, the repulse from Acre, cast no shadow on the romance of this wonderful Odyssey. When Bonaparte landed at Fréjus, having escaped the vigilance of English cruisers, a thrill of delight and relief passed through France. He had been long expected. Fiévée, who was living a retired life in a remote corner of the Bourbonnais, records the following fact in his memoirs: 'Every peasant I met in the fields, the vineyards, and woods, stopped and asked me if there was news of General Bonaparte, and why he did not come back to France. No one inquired after the Directory.'



## II

It was part of France's good fortune that the man who came to save her was himself a homeless adventurer, sprung not of French but of Italian stock, and attached to no creed, party, or faction of the State. He was a man who assessed the temperament of the French with the critical eye of a foreigner, and found it guilty of many irrelevant and disastrous emotions. For his part, he was not amused by useless sentiments, and imported a cold and wholesome dose of inhumanity into the conduct of affairs, which had so long been perturbed by short sleep, disordered nerves, and the passion of a vainglorious and undisciplined race to play the *beau rôle* on the theatre of humanity. Knowing by experience what artillery could do against a mob, he was proof against the panic-struck idolatry which had abased one French legislature after another, and made Paris horrible to Europe. His guns had quelled the rioters of Vendémiaire; he had punished Italian insurgents at Pavia, and stamped out the sudden furies of Cairo. For him the *canaille* had no terrors. He knew how

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to abate their strength and win their hearts. In cheap bread lay the supreme talisman of statesmanship.

The needs of France were such that only the highest powers of technical administration were adequate to meet them. Ten years of anarchy had broken up the roads, disorganized the hospitals, interrupted education, and thrown all the charitable institutions of the country out of gear. Forty-five of the Departments were reported as being in a state of chronic civil war. Robber bands two, three, eight hundred strong, scoured the country, pillaged the stage-coaches, broke into the prisons, flogged or slew the tax-collectors. The greater part of the clergy was in open rebellion against the State. No one obeyed the law. Conscripts refused to serve; the mobile columns who were entrusted with the duty of policing the disturbed regions had to forage for themselves and lived on rapine. Commercial credit had disappeared, for the currency had been depreciated, the State had declared partial bankruptcy, and English cruisers had long since interrupted foreign trade. Such had been the violence of the Revolution that almost all the talent and virtue of the country had been driven out of public life. The Government was in the hands of a small

knot of regicides, second-class revolutionaries, whose names carried no prestige and whose characters did not bear scrutiny. The bureaucracy was immense, but stained with the habit of pillage and corruption; the local officers were reported to be ignorant and venal, and many mayors were unable to sign their name. The navy, which during the American war had proved itself a match for Rodney, had been completely ruined by the democratic prejudice against the gunners and officers, and if other branches of the public service had not been disorganized to the same conspicuous extent there were none which reached an adequate standard of efficiency.

A general sense of uneasiness pervaded the country. The 1,200,000 men who had acquired during the Revolution the lands of the Church or the *émigrés* moved restlessly in their beds, for they knew themselves to hold under a title which the Church regarded as sacrilegious and would use all her moral influence to overthrow. In the debates of the Paris Jacobins the red spectre of Socialism had raised itself, and had begun to terrify the shopmen.

Napoleon brought to the task of government exactly that assemblage of qualities which the situation required, an unsurpassed capacity for

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acquiring technical information in every branch of government, a wealth of administrative inventiveness which has never been equalled, a rare power of driving and draining the energies of men, a beautiful clearness of intellect which enabled him to seize the salient features of any subject, however tough, technical, and remote, a soldierly impatience of verbiage in others combined with a serviceable gift of melodramatic eloquence in himself; above all, immense capacity for relevant labour. He could work eighteen hours at a stretch, could turn his mind at once from one subject to another entirely remote from it, and a few minutes were enough to put him in possession of the material facts. 'I am always working,' he said once to Roederer, 'at dinner, at the theatre. At night I get up to work. Last night I got up at two o'clock, put myself in an arm-chair before my fire, to examine the field-states sent in yesterday by the minister of war. I found twenty mistakes.' His cross-examination was quick and searching; none could tear his secret from the specialist with the dexterity of this man, who knew every process in the making of guns and the administration of armies, whose visual memory was such that it could bear the print on it of the face of

France with its network of roads and rivers, towns and bridges, with all the minute detail relevant to military purposes, the effective force of the several regiments, the stock of arms and ammunition at their command. No subordinate could hope to escape his vigilance. 'In column 22 of your account,' he writes from the camp of Boulogne to Barbé Marbois, minister of the Public Treasury, 'I see that among the holders of terminable annuities, you are paying one person of 1701, two of 1702, and more than 2,600 persons before 1720. This means that among the terminal annuitants there are 2,600 persons more than eighty-five years old. An account of these 2,600 persons must be printed, and of all the annuitants up to 1725; this account must be sent round to the prefects to verify the existence of these individuals, and to assure that they are the same persons as those to whom the annuity was credited.' This capacity for minute technical knowledge was combined with an imaginative grasp of all the human forces which law and administration may affect. He looked beyond the clever, sophisticated people in Paris, for whom Voltaire represented the sum of human wisdom, out into the fields and the teeming villages. He saw the

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peasants, penurious and greedy of the land, as Balzac has painted them, deeply suspicious of the nobility, dreading above all things the restoration of tithes and feudal dues, but romantic, superstitious, uneasy in their conscience, and attached by a thousand subtle ties of sentiment and association to the rites of the Catholic Church. He saw the small bourgeoisie in the provincial towns, prosaic, respectable, timid, with an incapacity for political initiation more than sufficiently evidenced by their inglorious self-effacement during the storm; and he knew that they desired a master who would quell the red politicians, make peace with Europe, and send up the price of Government stock. He realized the feelings of the men who had served in the Revolutionary armies or in one or other branch of the Revolutionary administration, the feelings of the men who had compromised themselves fatally by joining some Radical club, the feelings of all the embarrassed tradesmen in town and country who had managed to rid themselves of their burden of debt owing to the depreciation of Revolutionary paper. He reckoned up the tens of speculators who had made fortunes out of army contracts, the thousands who profiting by the laxity of the administration had escaped the

tax-collector, and he understood that, whatever disgust might have been felt for the Republic, France was still wedded to the cause of the Revolution.

He was not a religious man, in any orthodox sense, but he saw what power an autocracy such as that of the Turk or the Tsar gained by the control of religious forces, and knowing the religious sentiment to be profound and indestructible, he was determined to exploit it. 'Religion,' he said long afterwards, 'is a part of destiny. With the soil, the laws, the manners, it forms that sacred whole which is called *La Patrie*, and which one must never desert. The principal charm of a religion consists in its memories.' It followed from this that all improvised substitutes for Christianity were destitute of the distinctive power which a religion should possess — the power of awaking historic echoes. Theophilanthropy was a bad comedy; atheism a malady worse than fanaticism and destructive of national ethics; the mistake of the well-meaning philosophers of the Revolution was that, like Du Pont de Nemours, who rewrote the Lord's Prayer in detestably dull French for the benefit of Theophilanthropist congregations, they had no conception of religion, as a popular,

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if you like as a vulgar, force. 'Religion,' as he observed afterwards to Wieland, 'is not made for philosophers. . . . If I had to make a religion for philosophers it would be very different from that which I supply to the credulous.'

It was the task of statesmanship not to criticize the existing social forces in the light of philosophic dogma, but to recognize their strength and to use them for its own purpose—above all things to find and to follow the line of least division. In Italy Napoleon had learnt that a variance between Church and State is a malady which it is the duty of a strong man to cure, and coming to the head of affairs in France he made the fusion of opposites the cardinal feature in his system. Merlin and Muraire were called to preside in the Court of Cassation, though the first of these eminent jurists had condemned his learned brother to be proscribed and deported at Fructidor. Emigrants served in the household, the senate, and the armies; Girondins, Jacobins, and royalists sat together in the law courts, in the departmental councils, and in the Council of the State; the priests poured out into the sunlight from their dungeons, and in virtue of one of the early acts of the new government were permitted to enjoy



the free observance of Sunday. '*On peut se détester et correspondre ; quand il s'agit de mon service on doit mettre bas toutes les passions.*' Impartiality was the sovereign maxim of government. Everything was pardoned to the efficient and the docile.

The State which Napoleon founded was an autocracy based upon the *plébiscite*. Despotism was as essential to his own purposes and to the needs of France as was the support of the nation duly and patently expressed. 'Confidence,' according to the famous dictum of Siéyès, 'must come from below, power from above.' We may call the government of the Consulate and the Empire a tyranny if we please, but compared with the government which went before, it was a reign of freedom. It bridled the press, stamped out political debate, shook itself free from constitutional checks, and here and there, when political interests were involved, harshly interfered with the course of justice and the freedom of the subject. But it substituted a regular, scientific, civilized administration for a condition of affairs which bordered upon anarchy, cleansing the air of spite and suspicion, and making life safe and easy for the ordinary householder who was content to let the great world of politics go its own way.

The corner-stone of the central administration was the First Consul, assisted by the Council of State, a body to whom was entrusted the initiative in legislation and the supreme appellate jurisdiction in administrative causes. Here at last was a band of men eminent in technical knowledge, deliberating in secret, drawn from all parties, and consequently enabled to bring to the consideration of the great problems of French government the calm, dispassionate, trained intelligence which their solution demanded. Here was the great central laboratory of Government. It was in the Legislative Committee of the Council that the Codes were debated article by article; it is from the administrative decisions of the Council that the first firm and coherent body of French administrative law was formed. Later on, during the Empire, the Council of State became a political school for the young officials. A selected number of young men destined for the public service were permitted to attend the debates and to derive from them instruction in the problems and methods of government. In the Council, then, was the real motive power of the great machine. The other institutions of the Consulate were devised to mask the transition from liberty to despotism. A small body of a hundred

Tribunes permitted to debate but not to vote, a Legislative Assembly permitted to vote but not to debate, a Senate named by the head of the State, endowed with the function of safeguarding the principles of the Constitution and of naming the Tribunes and the legislators from lists submitted to them, after the popular will had been strained through an elaborate succession of sieves—such were the hollow compliments paid to the democratic principle. By degrees portions of the disguise, becoming inconvenient, were modified or suppressed. The Tribunate, which shone with the last glowing embers of Revolutionary eloquence, was first mutilated, then abolished; the dumb legislature sank more and more into insignificance, and the legislative will of the Sovereign made itself increasingly manifest in decrees and *senatus consulta*. At the close of the Empire every source of friction had been carefully eliminated from the working of the central machine.

The omnipotence of the State was no new idea in French politics; it was the old tradition of the monarchy, old as the close of the fifteenth century, illustrated as much by the industrial legislation of Colbert as by the domiciliary visits of the Terror. But under the Ancien Régime the action of the central authority was cumbrous

and impeded by all kinds of obstacles. Royal ordinances had to be confirmed by local parliaments, royal officials were compelled to accept local franchises. The variety of local custom, of weights and measures, the privileges of the Church, the aristocracy and the guilds, obstructed the smooth and efficient working of the administrative machine. The Revolution swept away the obstacles and Napoleon repaired the machinery. In the Department the will of the Government was represented by the prefect, in the District by the sub-prefect, in the Commune by the mayor. Communal and Departmental Councils met indeed to vote the Budget and to ventilate local grievances, but they were themselves the creatures of the Government. The period during which they were permitted to talk was limited by law, and it was well understood that their function was to smooth rather than to arrest the powerful machinery which was set in motion from Paris.

This highly centralized Government was actuated by the paternal theory of the State. To a mind so logical and comprehensive as Napoleon's no influence which might affect the psychology, the physique, or the conduct of the nation was indifferent. The physiocrats, im-

pressed by the complicated trammels with which the unwise economists of the Ancien Régime had throttled French trade and industry, cried out for *laissez faire*. To a man who thought in terms of armies, battalions, regiments, companies, of a nation wheeling about with obedient exactitude at the word of command, such a doctrine seemed anarchic and absurd. The State must form morals, control religion, manufacture a public opinion congenial to its institutions by the censorship of letters, regulate the distribution of private fortunes by its law of inheritance, fashion the minds of children by a great educational monopoly, and stimulate the particular types of effort which it desired to honour by means of Orders, prizes, and scholarships. It must be armed with powers of expropriation for purposes of public utility, and it must strike the imagination of material and prosaic men by its roads and canals, its avenues and streets, its harbours, bridges, and forts. The protection of national industry against foreign competition was part of the general scheme. The food supply of a capital which might some day be forced to stand a siege was subjected to severe regulation, and the butchers and bakers of Paris were compelled to become members of State corporations enjoying

an official monopoly of supply upon conditions determined by the Government.

It was a corollary that every form of religious denomination should be controlled by the State. The separation of Church and State which had been carried out in 1795 was rather an unforeseen result of the logic of facts than a premeditated scheme congenial to the general tendencies of the French mind. Neither the philosophers who speculated nor the politicians of the Constituent Assembly who legislated upon the subject had conceived it to be in any way desirable that the Roman Catholic Church should be dissociated from the French State. The conception of the lay state observing strict neutrality in the sphere of religion accorded neither with the Catholic tradition of the country nor with the deep-rooted idea of governmental omnipotence which was the legacy of the monarchy to the Revolution. The word *laïcité*, now so frequently on the lips of Frenchmen, was then unknown, nor had a single thinker or politician of eminence questioned the expediency of Church establishment. The Civil Constitution of the clergy of 1791 offended the Catholic conscience on many points. In particular it enacted that bishops should be chosen by the electoral assembly of their Department, and debarred



them from soliciting canonical institution from the Pope. But one thing it did not intend to do: it did not intend to weaken, rather it was its purpose in every way to strengthen, the links which bound the Roman Catholic religion to the State. Three things, however, were not foreseen by the framers of the Civil Constitution of the clergy. The first was the bankruptcy of the Government; the second, the schism in the French Church; the third was the rapid progress of aggressive infidelity among the men who wielded political power under the Terror. These politicians argued that they had very little money, that the Constitutional priests who alone had a claim upon the State chest were a minority of the Roman Church, and that, after all, Catholic priests, whether they had taken the oath to the Constitution or no, might be assumed to favour the counter-Revolution. The law of separation passed in 1795 legalized a situation which had existed in fact under the Terror; but it was the fortuitous result of exceptional conditions rather than the well-considered policy of France.

Bonaparte, to whom loose spiritual forces were repugnant, determined to annul these decisions. 'The people,' he said, 'must have a religion, and that religion must be in the hands of the

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Government. The French Clergy is now led by fifty emigrant bishops in the English pay. Their influence must be destroyed, and for this the authority of the Pope is necessary.' It was true that many positions advanced by Catholic theologians seemed to him to be contrary to public policy. It was an obvious antinomy that when the civil government had condemned a criminal to death, the priest should give him absolution and promise him Paradise; it was absurd that theological prejudice should obstruct a clear hygienic improvement like cremation. But, to one who viewed the political situation as a whole, the arguments for a treaty with the Church were overwhelming. The Concordat with the Papacy concluded in 1801 healed the schism in the Church, provided the requisite sanction for the land settlement of the Revolution, and restored the connexion of the Church and State. It was supplemented by a series of provisions known as the organic articles, which were designed to police the Church and to regulate its relations with the Holy See. It was for the State to settle the number of persons who might receive ordination in any given year, to supervise the seminaries in which religious instruction was given, to sanction the gathering of Church Councils, and the recep-



tion of Papal bulls. Cathedrals and churches were declared to be the property of the State, but placed at the disposition of the bishops ; and the Church, whose ministers received small salaries from the Government, was forbidden by law to acquire landed property. Religion, in other words, was to promote the ends of Napoleon's policy. The curé was expected to advocate conscription from the pulpit, to read out the army bulletins, and to inculcate veneration for the person of the Emperor. He was discouraged from indulging in theological discussions, urged to preach the simple virtues of passive obedience and Christian resignation, to teach the Imperial catechism, and to abjure the exciting topics of dogmatic theology or ecclesiastical politics. Since a prolonged tenure of his cure might win him political power with his parishioners, it was well that the curé should be frequently moved from parish to parish. Nor was anything judged more likely to lead to trouble than the confabulation of bishops. These dignitaries of the Church, whose modest stipends and bare, ill-furnished residences contrasted curiously with the sumptuous parade of the great prelates of the monarchy, were forbidden to correspond with each other or with Rome, to open a Church

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school or hold a Church Synod, without permission of the Government. The argus eye of the Minister of Cults scrutinized every episcopal charge, glanced at the seminarist as he bowed his head over his theme, and followed the country priest into his rustic pulpit.

Having undertaken the task of policing the soul, the State did not shrink from the duty of fashioning the mind. For secondary education it provided the *lycée*, a public school organized upon a military plan, and for young men who had passed from the *lycée* there was the University of France, holding, like the butchers and bakers of Paris, a monopoly of a certain product warranted wholesome. In every *lycée* there was the same programme of studies, the same hours, the same books in the library, the same military uniform. 'There will never,' said Napoleon, 'be a fixed political state of things in this country until we have a body of teachers instructed on established principles. So long as the people are not taught from their earliest years whether they ought to be republicans or royalists, Christians or infidels, the State cannot properly be called a nation.' There was an end, therefore, of the bold curiosity of the eighteenth century, which played so nimbly over the whole

surface of human belief. The political and moral sciences were the alcohol which went to the brains of rhetoricians and journalists, the cause of disorder and inconvenient curiosity. History too, unless properly written under Government direction, was a dangerous instrument of education. Mathematics, on the other hand, were safe and useful, medicine indispensable; the physical sciences, abstract or applied, brought glory to the human intellect and had a direct bearing on the national well-being. The University of France, created on March 17, 1808, was intended to include all the educational agencies in the Empire, and to form citizens attached to their religion, their country, and their family. No one could open a school or teach in public without being a graduate of the University, which was to create and administer the public and to authorize and supervise the private schools. The programme of university studies, being designed to train citizens of a particular type, was as much a matter of State concern as the sanitation of the barracks or the inspection of ammunition and gun-mountings. But this educational control was limited to the needs of the upper classes. The whole field of primary education was still left to voluntary effort, for it is a sound

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instinct of despotism to neglect the education of the masses.

Democracy was defined to be 'a career open to talent', and in this sense it might be contended that the Napoleonic State was democratic. The principle of social equality which had been the most precious conquest of the Revolution was secured, not indeed with logical completeness, but more fully than in any other European country, in the institutions of the Consulate and Empire. The fiscal system, based upon the principle of a balance between direct and indirect taxes, was roughly adjusted to taxable capacity. The law of inheritance continued to favour equality, and the great truth was discovered that the value of institutions depends upon the degree to which they assist the free development of human powers and the adequate remuneration of human merit. In the army, where efficiency was strictly and instantly tested, no other plan was possible than promotion according to merit, and a system of Government scholarships was designed to make an educational ladder for needy members of the middle class. But the elimination of caste, though a primary condition of social equality, is not in itself sufficient to secure an adequate measure of equal opportunity. The

Napoleonic State starved education. The Civil Code, impregnated with the dogmatic individualism of the juriconsults of the eighteenth century, permitted neither collective bargaining nor the formation of trade unions, and exposed the working classes to the ruthless operation of unfettered competition. In the great struggle between labour and capital the sympathy of Napoleon and of Napoleon's lawyers was on the side of capital. To capital he gives a majority on the industrial committee which is to decide trade disputes. An article of the Civil Code upon the hiring of servants and workmen lays down the proposition that the master has to be believed on his affirmation as to the amount of the wages paid during the last year and as to the sums given on account during the current year. The mere play of economic forces results in the establishment of privileged positions which law recognizes and confirms. Indeed, an absence of all distinctions was in Napoleon's view contrary to human nature. 'I defy you,' he said to Berlier, 'to show me a republic ancient or modern in which there have been no distinctions. You call them baubles; well, it is with baubles that men are led. I do not believe that the French love liberty and equality. The French have not been changed by ten

years of Revolution. They are like the Gauls, proud and fickle ; they have only one sentiment, honour.' To feed that sentiment he created, in the teeth of sharp opposition, the Legion of Honour. Then came the creation of a new nobility, and the restoration of entails. But in truth no one of these institutions greatly modified the spirit or structure of French society. The Legion of Honour, a personal distinction, incapable of bequest, and conferred upon all sorts and conditions of men for all sorts and conditions of service, did not, as was feared, create an Order. Rather it was the apt recognition of the principle of equal justice. The new nobility, devoid of historic tradition or official status, without functions to perform either in local or central government, and surrounded both in town and country by the strong sentiment of equality, had little influence, save to enlist vulgar ambition in the service of the Empire ; and though the introduction of entails would in time have led to the formation of large properties, the qualification for an entail was founded upon wealth, and consequently open to all whose industry was sufficient to secure them an adequate fortune.

The ' sacred right of freedom ', as it is described in the Constitution of 1799, was not compatible



with the restless energy of Napoleon. The civil liberty of the individual was to some extent assured by the institution of the jury of judgement or petty jury, by the publicity of trials, by the right to enter any trade, craft, or profession, and publicly to conform to any type of religious belief. It was, however, abridged in many important respects. There was no machinery analogous to that set up by the English Habeas Corpus Act, to protect a man from illegal imprisonment or to secure for him a speedy trial. A company of more than twenty persons could not meet together without a police permit. No citizen could be certain that his house would not be broken into at night, his papers seized, his person hurried off to a place of security until the police had satisfied their curiosity. The life of Fouché, Duke of Otranto, is a sufficient commentary upon the enormous power wielded by the police. Nothing can be more deplorable than that a Minister of Police should be the most important factor in the internal government of a country. But Fouché's position was no symptom of misrule, but rather the inevitable result of the Revolution. Inquisitorial vigilance was necessary for peace. Was there not a recrudescence of the Vendée in the summer of Waterloo?

Under the Empire, State prisons were formed to receive political prisoners, and the *lettres de cachet*, which it had been one of the boasts of the Constituent Assembly to abolish, were practically restored. Liberty of thought was as insecure as personal freedom. By a decree of June 17, 1800, the number of political journals was suddenly reduced to thirteen. The censorship of plays was as recklessly exercised as the censorship of newspapers. A piece by Alexandre Duval which had some royalist references was inadvertently passed by the censor and put upon the Paris stage. Bonaparte caused it to be withdrawn, and, upon a hint from the minister, the author took a year's holiday in Russia. No pamphlet was too small, no play too bad, for the meticulous interference of the police. The best writers, Chateaubriand, Mme. de Staël, de Bonald, and de Maistre, lived in exile, and the price which France paid for order was the silence of poetry and the death of criticism.

‘A free people is above all a people which respects persons and property. That is the whole spirit of our Code.’ Judged by its respect for the property of French citizens, the system of Napoleon did not belie the hopes of those who saw in him the saviour of society from anarchy or



socialism. The Code fortified the principle of private property not only by assisting its diffusion, but also by the care with which it prevented the acquisition of land by religious or industrial corporations. The State, however, limited the rate of interest, retained the penalty of confiscation, and claimed the right to expropriate individuals with due compensation on grounds of public utility. So long as the Napoleonic régime lasted, bourgeois and peasant alike felt themselves to be sheltered from the quadruple menace of the socialists, the royalists, the clericals, and the Jews.

The army had been based upon conscription during the Revolution, and Napoleon made conscription the corner-stone of the State. The economics of the army have recently been unveiled—the bad clothing, the arrears of pay, the flat dishonesty of the administration, which made the most exorbitant demands upon the courage of the soldier, and then disappointed him of his reward. Yet when did the army fail Napoleon? From Moscow to Lisbon, from the border of Denmark to the Straits of Messina, French soldiers proved themselves possessed of the fire and dash which first gave to the sons of freedom their incalculable momentum.

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The system of law and justice organized by Napoleon has been equally permanent—the hierarchy of courts, the appeal to the Council of State in administrative cases, the five Codes. This is not the place for a detailed examination of the principles of Napoleonic law. It is well, however, to notice that the Civil Code alone was drawn up during the Consulate, that it is nearer both in time and spirit to the Revolutionary law than are the Codes which were compiled in a more perfunctory manner under the darker shadows of Imperial despotism. It represents, in fact, a fair judicial compromise between the democratic ideas of the revolutionary assemblies and the jurisprudence of the monarchy, whereas the later Codes are practically reissues of ordinances passed under the Kings with some amendments. Again, it is worth remarking that the law of persons as defined in the Civil Code reflects three characteristic opinions of Napoleon—his persuasion of the inferiority of woman to man, his strong belief in paternal authority, and his view of the importance of divorce as a bulwark of family life. The spirit of the Codes may perhaps be represented as an enlightened application of immemorial traditions to an altered condition of affairs. We may imagine

that if it could be evoked in some bodily shape from the lifeless texts and commentaries, it might make some such allocution as this to the shades of the men who had framed the laws of the Revolution, and prepared the way for the legists of the Empire: 'You were right to recognize divorce, despite the opposition of the priests, for it is essential that unhappy marriages should admit of dissolution, but you were wrong to make divorce so easy, for you weakened the family and lessened the sense of responsibility under which marriages should be contracted. Again, your rigid democratic arithmetic has led to some results which conflict with public policy and tend to deprave private morals. Equality is all very well, but you allow bastards to inherit equally with lawful children, and you deprive the owner of property of any power of testation, by enjoining a strict subdivision of nine-tenths of his inheritance into as many equal shares as he has children lawful or unlawful. We, on the contrary, make a distinction between children born in and out of wedlock, for we cannot allow a democratic sum to work out to the perdition of morals. Again, we think it hard that a father should have no power of manifesting any individual preference in his will. We hardly think

this consistent either with the idea of private property or with the conception of liberty. We are even so lax as to imagine that the very power of giving some extra reward to a compliant son may fortify the authority of the parent, just as it may reasonably be supposed that the distribution of red ribbons and other forms of patronage increases the influence of the First Consul. Consequently, while we aim at equality in our land system, we slightly enlarge the liberty of the testator and, conversely, slightly diminish that portion of the inheritance which must be carved into equal shares. We make a cautious return to the older state of the law which we know to have prevailed in the north of France, and if our system is rather less favourable to equality than the law of the revolution, it is more congenial to the spirit of liberty and to the tradition of French jurisprudence. Again, in your charming enthusiasm you went so far as to decree that legal procedure was wicked, and that society could get on without lawyers. Indeed, you made it illegal for litigants to seek for professional advice, so deep was your conviction that a patriotic heart and a sound head were sufficient to state, traverse, or decide an action. Our view is different. We observe that your rule was never

obeyed even when it was most dangerous to dispute your authority. It only meant that litigants paid higher fees than ever for counsel surreptitiously given and received. Procedure seems, no doubt, technical to laymen, and the procedure of French courts may be capable of simplification; but it is not, as you imagine, the predatory apparatus of a bandit profession, but a series of rules the total effect of which is to equalize the chance of litigants and to minimize the room for caprice. The rules of civil procedure have for the most part been determined by the greatest of French jurists, the Chancellor d'Aguesseau, in the reign of Louis XV. It is our purpose to take his work as the basis of our Code. We notice, however, that in the philanthropic zeal which distinguished the legal work of men imbued by the elevated spirit of Montesquieu and Beccaria, the lawyers of the Revolution introduced from England the double jury and decided that a criminal trial should be oral and public. After much hesitation, and despite a great bulk of legal opinion, we have decided to retain the petty jury, or jury of judgement, but in the interests of executive authority we cannot permit the lax procedure with which the English appear to be content. The genius of our ancient



jurisconsults evolved a system which cannot be improved on for the exploration and punishment of crime. It was formulated in 1670, and to this system we make a partial return. We intend to suppress the grand jury, to allow the deposition of witnesses to be taken secretly in the absence of the prisoner, and to permit the *juge d'instruction* to decline to hear witnesses for the defence. But while this preparatory inquiry—ancient, we admit, and inquisitorial—is necessary for the full exploration of the case, we concede some of your improvements at a later stage. We allow the accused when the trial comes on to produce witnesses, to be assisted by counsel, to be heard in his own defence, to be tried in open court, and condemned or acquitted by a jury. It is true that our juries will be nominated by the prefect and that the prefect may act as *juge d'instruction*, but we cannot permit the guilty to escape, and our experience of its performances during the Revolution has taught us to view the jury with some distrust. Again, you legislators of the Constituent Assembly, though wise enough to retain capital punishment, erred on the side of humanitarian indulgence. The Empire does not so err. We believe in confiscation; we restore the penalty of branding. We



inflict a death penalty not only for murder and arson, but for theft and brigandage, corruption and false witness, where these offences can be shown to imperil life. We mutilate the parricide before sending him to the death which he deserves. We punish state crimes due to "false political ideas, the spirit of party, or ill-understood ambition", by deportation for life. If we may be allowed to express ourselves in general terms, we cannot subscribe to the doctrine of the infinite perfectibility of man which has been preached by some of the most eloquent of your philosophers. On the contrary, we find man to be credulous and often criminal, and if the truth be told, the eruption of new and powerful passions during the Revolution which your wisdom has adorned has contributed not a little to debase morality and to provoke the need of some strong countervailing medicine.'

### III

To those who concentrate their attention upon the civil work of Napoleon, upon the chaos which he found and the order which he created, and above all upon the endurance of his settlement of Church and army, law and administration, through a century of fevered change, it seems easy to forget that the medal has a dark as well as a shining face. The house of empire was built upon foundations some of which were of granite, others of treacherous sand. Napoleon appealed not only to the sound instincts of the French people, the Latin love of order and symmetry, the passion of the peasant for his little plot of land, of the bourgeois for his little investment in the funds, to the strong sense of family discipline, to the immemorial sentiment of religion and the fierce conviction of equality, but to other instincts also of inferior value. No government has exploited so systematically the national thirst for military glory. None has appealed more successfully to the material passions, or has presumed with such hardihood and success upon that administrative timidity of the French, part inertia,

part egotism, which is content to surrender the conduct of affairs in exchange for a quiet life.

The wars of Napoleon may be regarded from many points of view. We may, if we choose, consider them as wars of propaganda containing the precious seed of revolutionary philosophy to scatter it broadcast through Europe. Or again, we may consider them as wars of aggrandizement deliberately undertaken to extend the boundaries of France and to minister to the ambition of her ruler. It has been held by a long series of inquirers that the true way to look at the great drama of the Napoleonic period is to conceive of it as centred round a duel between France and England; a duel in which England, representing the old idea, is the implacable aggressor; France, representing the new forces of democracy, the spirited and resourceful defender, who, finding it impossible to strike her enemy at the heart, is compelled to cut off the supplies to the stomach, an operation which is found to involve the conquest of Europe. According to this view, the conquests of Napoleon were not intentional—not, as so often imagined, the results of a disordered ambition, but an inevitable consequence of the fact that England was an island, that she was at war with France, and would never consent to

a durable peace so long as France was in possession of Belgium. Hence arises a great duel between the sea and the land, between England, who claims to blockade the continental coast, and France, who poses as the champion of the liberty of the seas. By the inexorable logic of history, Napoleon the Pacific is compelled to fight Austria and Prussia, to oust the Bourbons from Naples, to annex the states of the Church, to attempt the subjugation of the Iberian Peninsula, to leave the bones of a noble army bleaching in the Russian snows, because it is his duty as the heir of the Revolution to defend the prize which the armies of the Revolution had won. Others lay special stress upon the power exerted over Napoleon's mind by historical memories. They regard his policy as moulded, not perhaps entirely, but to a greater extent than is often allowed for, by the tradition of Julius Caesar and Diocletian, of Charlemagne and Alexander. In his Egyptian and Syrian campaigns, in his plans for the conquest of India and the partition of Turkey, in the scheme sketched out once in conversation but perhaps never seriously intended, for marching from Moscow to the Steppes, Napoleon is directly inspired by Alexander; just as in his assumption of the Iron Crown, in his

settlement of Germany, in his general conception of an empire covering Western Europe and co-extensive with Latin Christianity, he is concerned to exhibit himself as the successor of Charlemagne. Thus his conquests and their organization may be regarded as the ultimate triumph of that classic spirit which acts sub-consciously on men of the Latin race, and was so potent and decisive a factor in the rhetorical education of the French Revolution. Or again, it may be shown how, intermingled with this classical conception of empire, there was a family policy derived from the deep instincts of the Corsican clan. Napoleon, 'the miraculous child', carves his way to fortune, but he does not arrive alone. His mother, his brothers and sisters, his wife's relations, his uncle, his sister's husband, crowd forward to seize the best places. They become kings and queens, princes and princesses, high dignitaries of state, some entrusted with grave responsibilities, like Joseph, the eldest brother, successively King of Naples and Spain; others kept merely for show, like the feeble Borghese, the husband of the lovely Pauline, who holds court in Turin. A family policy was no new idea in France. Shoots from the Bourbon tree had been made to sprout in Spain, in Naples, in



Parma, after prolonged efforts of diplomacy and notable passages of war. But here was a family union covering a wider area of Europe, organized on a stricter plan as part of a fighting coalition against England. . An obscure Corsican family had improved upon the old endemic brigand tradition of their mountainous island. They had boarded the state coach, turned out the drivers, and made off with the valuables. In 1810, before Napoleon's second marriage, brothers were ruling in Holland, Spain, and Westphalia; Northern Italy was under a step-son; Southern Italy under a brother-in-law; Tuscany under a sister. Baden, Wurtemberg, and Bavaria had been compelled to marry into the house of parvenus. Then came the birth of an heir, proudly entitled the King of Rome, and with him preparations for a more closely-jointed European State. Holland and the Hanseatic regions were incorporated in France, while provision was made for the viceroy of the Italian kingdom in a small German principality. A way was prepared for the union of Italy. It was settled that the King of Rome should rule the land, while Pope and Cardinals, the Archives of the Vatican, and the directing machinery of the Roman Church, were to be transferred to Paris.

No estimate does justice to Napoleon which



fails to recognize in him a disinterested passion for practical improvement. He was one of those rare men who assume that everything they come across, from a government to a saucepan, is probably constructed on wrong principles and capable of amendment. One day Chaptal found his master in high glee, for he had just effected a saving of thirty-five thousand francs a year upon his household budget at Malmaison. 'I asked him,' writes the famous chemist, 'on what objects he had effected his economies. "On coffee," he replied. "They used to consume a hundred and fifty-five cups of coffee a day; every cup cost me two sous, which came to fifty-six thousand five hundred and seventy-five francs a year. I have suppressed the coffee and granted my household seven francs and sixpence by way of compensation. I shall spend twenty-one thousand a hundred and sixty-five francs, and save thirty-five thousand."' The same incisive energy was shown in his plans for civil improvement. When he visited a town, he would throw out plans for avenues and parks, clarify the municipal finance, consolidate the charitable endowments, cross-question the traders and manufacturers of the region, and leave the whole place thrilling with new ideas and the bustle of change. So, too,

wherever new conquests were organized, Napoleon took care to introduce the leading principles upon which the French State had been refashioned. Feudalism was abolished, equality was proclaimed, toleration and industrial freedom took the place of monopoly in Church and trade. After no great interval of time the Codes followed the eagles, equalizing property, legalizing divorce and civil marriage, and substituting for barbarous forms of criminal procedure the open trial and the jury. Skilled Frenchmen, trained in the finest school of administration which Europe has known, taught the secret of orderly account-keeping, enlightened finance, and the lucid drafting of laws. Hundreds of intelligent men who had lived under slow and secretive despotisms now for the first time understood the beauty of methodical design in government. Wherever a French State was founded the old social barriers disappeared. 'Take care,' wrote Napoleon to his youngest brother, Jerome, 'to compose the majority of your Council of commoners. See to it that the third estate has most of the government posts. . . . This will go to the heart of Germany, and perhaps annoy the other class. Do not mind that. The declared principle is to choose talents wherever they can be found.' To many a German and Italian Napoleon

seemed to be the sword of the modern idea. Goethe and Hegel, Von Müller the historian of Switzerland, Pasolini, one of the future liberators of Italy, viewed him as a great world-spirit whose mission it was to destroy that which was old and evil, and to establish that which was new and good. 'Be a constitutional king,' wrote Napoleon to the new sovereign of Westphalia; 'it is necessary that your subjects should enjoy a degree of liberty, equality, and well-being unknown to the people of Germany. This will be a more powerful barrier against Prussia than the Elbe, or fortresses, or French protection. What people would wish to revert to Prussian despotism when it has once tasted the benefits of a wise and liberal government?'

A liberal government? In what sense can the term 'liberal' be applied to these parasitic governments of the Grand Empire? Among the many wise sayings of Napoleon there is one so wise that if it had guided his dealings with alien States as it inspired his policy within the borders of France, there might have been no cataclysm. It is this: 'The strength of a people depends upon its history', which means that you cannot rule a nation unless you adjust your political contrivances to suit the peculiar temperament which

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has been fashioned by historic forces. In his reconstruction of France Napoleon built upon the permanent elements of the national psychology. He gave France what she wanted, and his work has outlasted three Revolutions. The felicitous political compromise which he devised for Switzerland was another case of a political plan carefully adjusted to somewhat peculiar conditions. The problem was to reconcile the conflicting ideals of a democratic unitary State on the one hand, and jealously guarded cantonal liberties on the other ; and the Act of Mediation solved it to the satisfaction of the Swiss. In Poland, again, a Constitution was framed upon lines suggested by circumstances in the national history. But elsewhere there was little pretence of deference to the consecrated force of historical association. The Constitutions given to the dependencies of the Empire are variations on one despotic archetype. They are devised not to direct but to resist the spontaneous tide of popular opinion. Everywhere there is the same model despotism, with its nominated Council of State serving as the laboratory of legislation and government, its legislature deprived of initiative, deliberating in secret and in silence, and liable to reproof or suspension on the slightest sign of animation or volition.

Freedom of election had been tried in France during the Revolution, and without success. How could it be expected that people so far inferior to the French as were the Italians, the Germans, and the Spaniards, should avail themselves wisely of this dangerous privilege? What sane man would entrust a vote to the priest-ridden peasantry of the Lombard plain, to the idle lazzaroni of Naples, or to those valorous, debased Hessians whose matted hair and harsh features sent a shudder down the spine of the French traveller? Experience had already shown what even Robespierre had surmised, that the peoples of Europe were not burning to cast off their chains; and the lessons of experience were improved by the resources of egotism. 'I know more,' observed Napoleon, 'in my little finger than is known by all the heads in Italy put together'—a gratifying conviction for which a convenient and ingenious embodiment was devised at the Consulta of Lyons in 1802. Here it was arranged that the voting power of the new Italian Republic should be distributed among three bodies: a college of proprietors, a college of savants, and a college of merchants and manufacturers. The members of these bodies were to be elected for life, to meet at least once in two years for a period not exceeding



fifteen days, to submit to a small body of twenty-one persons styled the Censura a list of candidates for the legislature and the judicial bench, from which the Censura was to make the final selection. It was once a doctrine professed by Burke that all great public collections of men possess a marked love of virtue and an abhorrence of vice. No thesis could be more antipathetic to the views of Napoleon, or to the spirit embodied in the Constitution which he devised for Northern Italy. It was his object not to provoke but to avert 'great public collections of men'. The College of Possidenti was to meet at Milan, the College of Dotti at Bologna, the College of Commercianti at Brescia, while the grand electoral tribunal was to give a last solemn shake to the electoral sieve at Cremona. Since the First Consul took the precaution to nominate the legislature and never permitted a fresh election, that shake caused no tremor in the body politic. The Italian legislature was equally nugatory. One August day when Napoleon was enjoying the salt breezes of Boulogne, a dispatch came from Milan announcing that a Chamber of Italian nominees had been protesting against certain cardinal items in the Imperial programme, notably against the large sums of money allocated for the support of French



troops. 'My cousin,' replied the Emperor to Prince Eugène, 'you will have received a decree in which I have adjourned the legislative body. When these legislators have a king to themselves, he may be amused at these games of prisoner's base, but as I have no time, and they are all passions and faction, I shall not summon them again.'

So much, then, for the political liberty of the Italian. The guarantees for civil liberty were equally precarious. At Cornalba, in the Department of Serio, there was a certain Madellena Vastali, who, like the Nun of Kent, passed as a saint and secured a considerable following among credulous and reactionary neighbours. She had ecstasies and visions, and professed to have received the stigmata. A parish priest acknowledged her claims and assisted in spreading her influence, proclaiming that a waxen image of the Virgin had made an inclination of respect towards the vessel of the Divine purpose. A government whose clerical policy was viewed with bitter suspicion in Rome did not permit miracles to occur with impunity. Prophetess and priest were arrested by the Director of Police, cast into a dungeon in Bergamo, where they might have time to reflect upon the relation between miracles and the

Penal Code. Then the Viceroy was informed of the occurrence and asked for directions. Eugène was a mild, punctual, obedient servant, who knew something of his master's mind. He directed that the propheticess should be shut up for six months in a house of correction, sentenced the priest to a similar term of imprisonment, and forthwith deprived him of his living. There was neither formal inquiry nor public trial. No witness was heard in the defence, nor was any consultation held, save with the Minister of Public Worship and the Director of Police.

The working of parliamentary government implies the responsibility of ministers to a popularly elected chamber, freedom of speech, and adequate guarantees for personal liberty. No one of these conditions was realized in any of the numerous States of the French Empire. Since the first few decades of the counter-reformation the free movement of human curiosity and human intelligence has never been so closely restrained over so large a surface of Europe. The lectures of university professors, the newspapers and books, the slightest pamphlet, the heaviest tome, were subjected to a vigilant censorship. Wherever the eagles flew, there followed a swarm of police spies opening letters, defaming reputations, spoiling careers,

robbing private life of its security, and tainting the stream of public activity. That an atmosphere of apprehension might be created among the Germans, a bookseller was court-martialled and put to death in Nuremburg for selling a pamphlet which denounced the conduct of the French soldiers in Bavaria. It was an unlawful act to criticize the Emperor, to malign the French, to pass the faintest animadversion on the conscription, the blockade, or the taxes. As free reporting was dangerous, the Government provided its own bilingual organs, full of dull, innocuous pabulum, some laws and decrees, the account of a State reception or a treatise on Forestry, tricked out with items of Paris intelligence and the last imperial bulletins from the seat of war. The political news was for the most part calculated to mislead, for the Emperor who cheated at cards had no scruple in suppressing or falsifying facts. On a scale unparalleled in history he erected mendacity into an art of empire.

Yet sterilizing as censorship must necessarily be, these French governments provided a real form of education to the Germans and Italians who were caught up in the administration of public affairs. If the Empire demanded political servility, it shattered the obdurate crust of habit and

substituted wide ideals of efficient combination for narrow, slovenly, lethargic provincialism. 'You have,' said Napoleon in a valedictory address to the Italians at Lyons, 'nothing but special laws, henceforward you must have general laws. Your people has only local habits, it is necessary that it should take on national habits. Lastly, you have no army. The Powers which may become your enemies have strong armies; but you have what can produce strong armies, a numerous population, a fertile country, and the example of the first people in Europe.' In these penetrating and profound remarks, Napoleon diagnosed the remedy and prescribed the medicine. His net was widely and cunningly spread. Stendhal reports in 1818, that if you met an intelligent elderly man in the streets of Milan, it was safe to assume that he had served in the French Administration.

It was the peculiarity of the Napoleonic Empire that it was built up with a view to conquest, that the ring of dependent States were the satellites of Mars. We have only to examine the conditions under which they worked to assure ourselves that it is not their interest which is consulted, but the interest of the Master of the Legions. The military contributions with which they were burdened rendered it impossible to carry out any

educational schemes on a large scale. Half the domain from which the budget of the dispossessed princes was nourished was appropriated to the French Emperor and allotted to French generals, French favourites, or members of the French Civil Service. The new State was subjected to the conscription, and compelled to furnish a quota of troops often quite out of proportion to its population, to feed the wars of the Empire. In the wake of the conscription came a Penal Code imposing severe and elaborate penalties upon deserters and recalcitrant conscripts, and full of ingenious thumbscrews for extorting the required tribute of human flesh. The continental blockade was another attendant circumstance of French government little calculated to commend it to the favour of the commercial and manufacturing classes. Add to this the free quartering of French soldiery, the manifold extortions of generals and officers, the removal of objects of art and value from local museums to Paris, the heavy duties imposed on German and Italian wares at the French frontier, and it will readily be seen that administrative efficiency was purchased at a high price. The literature of invective which accumulated round the head of Malchus, the capable financier who procured resources for the



government of Westphalia, the popular fury which caused the death of Prina in Milan, are evidence of the hatred which Napoleonic finance succeeded in inspiring. The downfall of the Empire was acclaimed all over Holland, Germany, and Belgium as a welcome and necessary relief from a tyranny too hard to be borne.

It may, however, be argued that these were merely temporary hardships, the result of the accident of war, rather than an essential ingredient in the Napoleonic system. But it is difficult to believe that Napoleon had any permanent plan for the settlement of Europe. There was never so restless a diplomatist. He would change the boundaries of States and open up new horizons from month to month, like a child who amuses itself with bricks, now making a castle, now a temple, now a farmhouse, and now a wall. This manipulation of human souls and territories was of course no new feature in European politics. There had been the partition of Poland, then schemes for the partition of Bavaria, and finally, in 1803, a great readjustment of German territories carried out in Paris as a consequence of the conquest of the Rhine frontier by France. But never did territorial changes follow one another with such bewildering rapidity, or from motives so



difficult to desery, as during the last years of the Empire. The sense that everything was provisional, that nothing was intended to last, entered as a paralysing force into the calculations even of Napoleon's best subordinates.

It may be asked, again, whether the Napoleonic conquests were inspired by the idea of nationality. That the growth of nationalities was one of the results of Napoleon's work is obvious to any student of modern history. In Germany, for instance, Napoleon carried out a great and salutary simplification of political geography. In 1803 the number of German principalities was reduced from 250 to 39 and a Protestant majority secured in the Diet. Two years later Bavaria and Wurtemberg received important additions of territory, and then in 1806 the Holy Roman Empire was abolished and a Confederation formed in its place under the protectorship of France. The elimination of Austria from the German system was an essential step towards the union of Germany ; and though it is true that the skill of Metternich procured for Austria a dominant influence in the German Confederation after the fall of Napoleon, the spell of a thousand years had been broken, and the formation of a united Germany without the Habsburgs became one of the permanent political

ideas in the German mind. And apart from the direct influence which was thus exerted, there was the negative influence of the reaction. The war of liberation was an act of the whole German people, an event entirely different in character from the wars which had been waged by German sovereigns for their own dynastic interest in the eighteenth century. From every quarter, from poets and historians, from philosophers and men of action, came the cry that the German nation must be liberated from the Latin yoke. Even in the realm of law, where the French influence had been most beneficial, there was a pronounced reaction against a Code which was declared to be alien to the Teutonic genius and to the historic traditions of the race. But at the same time some Germans wisely apprehended the lesson of Bonapartism. 'Democratic principles in a monarchical government seems to me,' wrote the Prussian statesman Hardenberg, 'to be the formula appropriate to the spirit of the times.'

It is one of the ironies of history that Napoleon I prepared the way for Bismarck, that the French made Germany, as the English made France, and as the Spanish kingdoms were the outcome of the long crusade against the Moors. It is, however, a wild paradox to assert that

Napoleon had any intention of educating a German nation. The confederation of the Rhine was an old device of French diplomacy, carried out with resources far in excess of those which Mazarin had been able to command, but essentially identical in aim with the Rhenish federation of the seventeenth century. Its object was to create in Germany a *clientèle* of princes whose armies and treasuries would be at the disposal of the French Emperor. That these States should develop an independent or liberal life was the last thing which Napoleon intended. On the contrary, the more despotic the power of the prince the more regularly could the Emperor rely upon a punctual remittance of conscripts. The subject kings were accordingly encouraged to dispense with constitutional machinery, and so to recompense themselves for their subservience in foreign policy by autocracy at home. ‘Monsieur L’Abbé,’ said Napoleon to Dalberg, the subservient prince-primate, ‘I will tell you a secret. The small people in Germany wish to be protected against the big people; the big people wish to govern according to their fancy. Now as I only want men and money from the Confederation, and as it is the big people and not the small people who can supply me with these two requisites, I leave

the big people in peace, and the others must get on as best they can.' *Il faut dépayser l'Allemagne* was the motto of the policy. The kingdom of Prussia was marked out for special humiliation, mutilated of its Westphalian and Polish provinces, condemned to pay a crushing war indemnity and to support the burden of a French army of occupation. It was one of Napoleon's constant regrets that he had been too lenient to the Power which wiped out the memory of Jena on the field of Waterloo.

Italy was the land of Napoleon's ancestors, and Italian was the language which came most readily to his lips. Under his rule, for the first time since the Lombard invasions, the whole Italian Peninsula was governed on a single plan. From the Alps to the Straits of Messina lawyers were administering the French Codes, engineers were building roads and bridges, financial agents were making cadastral surveys, administrators were applying the wealth of the monasteries to secular uses, lighting towns, and enforcing the conscription. The three great obstacles to Italian unity—the foreign dynasties, the Papacy, the spirit of locality—were for the moment broken in the great movement of the French Empire. Marengo had sealed the fate of Austria in Lombardy, Austerlitz had

cleared the Habsburgs out of Venice, a swift and easy campaign drove the Bourbons from Naples. In 1809 the States of the Church were carved into Departments and incorporated in the French Empire. Here, then, in the army, in the Codes, in the common system of administration, the foundations of a modern Italy were laid. And here the memory of Napoleon was not easily forgotten. Italians knew once more that the race of Michael Angelo had not exhausted its power of breeding prodigious men. They took on fresh courage, conceived new hopes, and were schooled to new virtues. The ablest sons of Italy entered the Civil Service, and threw themselves with zest into all the thrilling problems of a modern administration. The armies of the Empire opened out careers of manly adventure to men whose idleness had been spiced with verses, gossip, and flirtation. Chateaubriand disliked Napoleon, but this is what he says of the French work in Naples : 'These new monarchies of a military dynasty brought life into a country which had been distinguished by the dying languor of an old race.' And again : 'We brought to Rome the germ of administration. Napoleon is great because he restored, enlightened, and administered Italy in a superior way.' It should be remembered that

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Italy was spared some of the worst afflictions of the great war. It was not the main road to Austria or Russia, and the kingdom of Naples, owing to its geographical position, was immune from the military visitation which brought such financial disaster to the kingdom of Westphalia. With true insight into Italian character, Napoleon took care that some compensation should be afforded for the disappearance of the Princes. He sent Prince Borghese to hold court at Turin, while Eugène represented the Empire in Milan, Elise in Florence, and Murat in Naples. It was a design that the heir to the Empire should reside in Rome. But a closer study of Napoleon's correspondence reveals the fact that Italy was not an end but a means. The possession of this convenient peninsula opens out the route to Vienna, Constantinople, and Cairo. The successive acquisitions of territory were determined not by a consideration of the interests of the Italians, but by a strict calculus of their utility to the diplomatic and military scheme of the Master of France. The Italian Republic was formed after Marengo to give Napoleon the control of the Valley of the Po and to bring France to Ancona, the convenient port for the Dalmatian coast. The annexation of the Papal States did not present itself as the con-



sequence of any lofty view as to the incompatibility of spiritual functions and temporal government, though this is urged more than once in the Imperial correspondence. Rather it was due to the fact that every sovereign of Italy must join the continental blockade or fall. When twelve duchies were created out of the Venetian territory to serve as an endowment for French generals, the Italians felt aggrieved and their complaints were forwarded to Paris. What did Napoleon reply? 'The duchies ought to be the exclusive recompense of my soldiers. Doubtless I have treated Venice as a conquered country, but how have I obtained Venice except by conquest? You must not depart too far from this idea. When the fruits of victory have been realized, I shall behave as a good sovereign if they behave as good subjects. I forbid you ever to encourage a hope that an Italian or a Venetian may be promoted to any of the duchies.' Nor was it from a sympathy with the principle of nationality that Napoleon encouraged the aspirations of the Poles. 'I wish in Poland,' he said to Narbonne, 'a camp and not a forum. . . . The whole problem consists in exciting the national fibre of the Poles without awakening the liberal fibre.' In other words, the Polish chivalry must be launched against Russia,

and yet no encouragement must be given to that ancient spirit of freedom and anarchy which was the characteristic of the old Polish Constitution.

The Grand Empire was in fact a coalition against England, rather than a contrivance designed for the benefit of the peoples who were swept into it. The Belgians, an unwarlike, ultramontane population of manufacturers and peasants, who during the early period of the Consulate had enjoyed the benefits bestowed by a wise and equable administration, were alienated by the conscription, by the blockade, and above all by the treatment which the French Government meted out to the Pope. They had revolted against the centralizing policy of Joseph II, but here was a system of centralization stricter than the Austrian, and involving among its incidents injury to the Catholic conscience and the ruin of Antwerp. For the Dutch, whose life-blood was free trade, the results of the continental system were even more distressing, and bitter memories were left of the Napoleonic Administration. This proud, obstinate, and simple race had, until the storm of the French Revolution burst upon it, conserved the aristocratic federalism of its great age. It had ceased to be a home of scholars or a laboratory of thought, its commerce had dwindled, and its colonies were

torn from it during the war. In no quarter were national interests more deliberately sacrificed to the military needs of the Empire. Louis, the Emperor's brother, who was charged with the government of the country in 1806, conceived it to be his primary duty to forward the interests of his Dutch subjects. He was not a man of robust health or tenacious will, he had little personal charm, and he never learnt to pronounce the Dutch language, but he was conscientious, well-meaning, and far above the general level of ability. If he had been left to himself he would have carried out great improvements in Holland, and his dynasty would have struck root. But he was reminded that he was a French prince above all things, and that his policy was subject to the general convenience of the Empire. 'Holland in reality is only a part of France. We may define the country by saying that it is the alluvion of the Rhine, the Meuse, and the Scheldt—that is to say, of the great arteries of the Empire. The nullity of its customs, the disposition of its agents, and the spirit of its inhabitants, which tends always to a fraudulent commerce with England—all this imposes on us the duty of interdicting to it the commerce of the Rhine and the Weser.' A series of brutal reproofs conceived in this spirit

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drove Louis from the throne which he could no longer occupy with self-respect, and in 1810 Holland was incorporated in the Empire.

‘You know history,’ said Napoleon to Narbonne; ‘are you not struck with the resemblances between my government and that of Diocletian—its close far-reaching network, these all-pervading imperial eyes, the omnipotence of the civil authority in a military empire?’ The French Empire was no doubt conceived upon the Roman model, and followed the main lines of the Roman political geometry. Europe again witnessed a vast area submitted to a common law, administered by a great centralized bureaucracy, and obedient to the will of a single master. Poles and Illyrians, Dutchmen and Germans, Italians and Belgians, worked under the common yoke. It was part of the settled policy to accelerate a fusion of the heterogeneous races. A contingent of skilled Illyrian seamen were ordered to Toulon, Dutch officers were stationed in France, while Frenchmen took over their commands in Holland. Whenever a new country was annexed, lists would be prepared of natives suitable for the Senate, or the Legislature, or the Council of State and its satellite bodies. ‘London,’ said Napoleon, ‘is the corner of the world, Paris is the centre.’ Repre-

sentatives from Piedmont, Tuscany, and Rome, from Belgium, Holland, and the Hanseatic departments in Germany, might be seen in the capital assisting in the task of Imperial administration. The spread of the French language was actively encouraged, not only by means of the Press and the schools, but also by travelling companies of comedians. Italian and German mothers who were ambitious for their sons sent them to France to learn the law and the language of the conqueror. German professors began to dissert upon the Codes, the printing presses of Italy began to turn out works upon the art of war, which had again become interesting. Only in Spain was there entire insensibility to the civilization of the Empire and a complete abhorrence of French rule.

The foundations of Empire were unsound. Each acquisition of territory was a move in the game of conquest, each new dependency a fresh plate in the armour of a warlike Empire. Thus it was the principal mission of Holland to contribute seamen and naval arsenals; of Venice, endowments for French marshals; of all and every State, forts and tribute and conscripts. Of such an empire as this despotism was the soul and delation the shadow. Political interference thwarted



the administration of justice, and abased the honour of the law. A mayor of Antwerp, an elderly and respected man, was brought before the assize court of Brussels on a charge of embezzlement. The accuser was the French commissioner of police, and the motive of the charge a private grudge arising from a woman's quarrel. After a long trial, and in spite of the ingenuity of an unscrupulous prosecution, the mayor was honourably acquitted, amid the plaudits of his fellow-citizens. But the illuminations of Antwerp were premature, and the lovers of justice were to learn that though the good sense of a Belgian jury might foil the malevolence of a French police officer, it was of no account in the eyes of the Master of Europe. Napoleon, campaigning in Germany, heard of the occurrence, viewed it as a French disaster, and ordered the old man to be tried a second time before a different court and in another region. The prefect of the Department protested and resigned ; the Senate of France murmured and obeyed. Under the authority of a *senatus-consult* the innocent man was haled off to a prison in Douai, and there expired, his end hastened by shame, maltreatment, indignation, and surprise, before the servility of the local jury could be put to the proof.



Where the pocket of the administration was touched, the chances of a litigant were desperate. A government creditor might as well expect to recover the whole of his debt from the Imperial administration, as a deserter from the colours to receive the Legion of Honour from one of Davout's military tribunals. Great interests were systematically neglected and misunderstood, the interest of commerce on the one hand, of religion on the other. 'Commerce dries up the soul, the merchant has neither faith nor country'; and to this distrust of commerce as a source of patriotic indifference or a bond of international amity Napoleon added an ignorance of its proper function and anatomy. That trade routes could be altered at will and the current of economic demand forcibly diverted from one channel to another, was part of the Imperial philosophy which regarded commercial exchange as something sterile and light in the balance when compared with the solid interests of the farm and the factory. The magnet of Empire could entice the wealth of the East to Trieste; tariff walls could shut the Rhine provinces from Germany, build up the manufacturing power of the mainland, and liberate Europe from its dependence on colonial supplies. In the sphere of religion the old doctrine of

Gallicanism was revived, as if a national principle could be adapted to a cosmopolitan Empire and a mutinous Church.

The permanence of the Napoleonic fabric depended on the degree to which the policy of the Emperor could be adjusted to the real interests of France. But, as Talleyrand saw in 1808, the policy of Napoleon was becoming increasingly dissociated from the opinion and the tradition of France. The element of hyperbole and extravagance, the scheme of Oriental conquest sheathed in the treaty of Tilsit, the rash and fatal plunge into Spain, opened the eyes of thinking men to the real character of Napoleon's conduct of affairs. And meanwhile, both in the army and in the administration, the momentum and the loyalty were being slowly impaired. It has been remarked by Chaptal how, as the despotic habit grew upon him, Napoleon became increasingly impatient of able and independent men. The spirit of free and vigorous criticism which had marked the early debates in the Council of State was silenced under the stiff etiquette of the Empire. Good wholesome advice was systematically neglected, the conduct of foreign affairs passing from the wise Talleyrand to the less wise Champagny, and afterwards to Maret, the Duke of Bassano, the

fluent and obedient scribe of a servile State. As the plague of dependence spread, the administration became filled up with men of royalist antecedents and leanings, unaffected by the momentum of the Empire and unconcerned at its fall. The spirit of moderation and good sense which had been overcome by the brilliant romance of the early victories revolted against the extravagance which marked the later designs. If the wish of France could have been translated into words, men would have prayed for a continuation of the Empire without the restless egotism of Napoleon. And yet, when the Empire fell, the imagination of the world was touched by the sudden catastrophe of so much greatness. Here, in the field of action, were events more wonderful than the Arabian Nights, the matter for a thousand poems, histories, and romances. Aliens felt the spell as well as natives; those whose eyes had once beheld the conqueror in his famous little three-cornered hat, treasured the vision of him as the chief prize of memory. A German Jew, a native of the Grand Duchy of Berg, saw the Emperor once in 1811 as he rode into Düsseldorf, and long afterwards, having risen to fame for his bitter and passionate lyrics, thus described the great experience of his boyhood: 'It was in that very avenue of the court

garden at Düsseldorf. As I pressed through the gaping crowd, thinking of the doughty deeds and battles which Monsieur Le Grand had drummed to me, my heart beat the "general march"—yet at the same time I thought of the police regulation, that no one should dare ride through the avenue under penalty of a fine of five thalers. And the Emperor with his retinue rode directly through the avenue. The trembling leaves bowed towards him as he advanced, the sunbeams quivered, frightened, yet curious, through the green leaves, and in the blue heaven above there swam visibly a golden star. The Emperor wore his invisible-green uniform and the little world-renowned hat. He rode a white steed, which stepped with such calm pride, so confidently, so nobly—had I then been Crown Prince of Prussia I would have envied that steed. Carelessly, almost lazily, sat the Emperor, holding his rein with one hand, and with the other good-naturedly patting the horse's neck. It was a sunny, marble hand, a mighty hand—one of those two hands which bound fast the many-headed monster of anarchy, and ordered the war of races—and it good-naturedly patted the horse's neck. Even the face had that hue which we find in the marble of Greek and Roman busts; the traits were as nobly cut as in the antique, and on that

face was written, "Thou shalt have no Gods before me". A smile, which warmed and soothed every heart, flitted over the lips — and yet all knew that those lips needed but to whistle—*et la Prusse n'existait plus*; those lips needed but to whistle—and the entire clergy would have stopped their ringing and singing; those lips needed but to whistle—and the entire Holy Roman Empire would have danced. And those lips smiled and the eye smiled too. It was an eye clear as heaven; it could read the hearts of men, it saw at a glance all the things of this world, while we others see them only one by one and by their coloured shadows. The brow was not so clear, the phantoms of future battles were nestling there; there was a quiver which swept over that brow, and those were the creative thoughts, the great seven-mile-boot thoughts, wherewith the spirit of the Emperor strode invisibly over the world—and I believe that every one of those thoughts would have given to a German author full material wherewith to write, all the days of his life.

'The Emperor rode quietly straight through the avenue. No policeman opposed him; proudly, on snorting horses and laden with gold and jewels, rode his retinue; the drums were beating, the

trumpets were sounding; close to me the wild Aloysius was muttering his general's name; not far away the drunken Gumpertz was grumbling, and the people shouted with a thousand voices, "Long live the Emperor!"<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Heine, *Reisebilder*, tr. C. G. Leland.



## IV

THE Bourbon dynasty who were recalled to France in 1814 owed this sudden favour of fortune to no merit of their own. Their party was almost extinct, their persons dim and forgotten, and as the Tsar of Russia marched through the eastern provinces of France he discovered no trace of loyalty to the white flag. Twenty-five years crowded with brilliant events and far-reaching changes had passed since Louis, Count of Provence, and his brother D'Artois had fled across the frontier to escape the furies of the Revolution; and in the new and vivid life of the Empire all that concerned the old world of the monarchy had seemed archaic, irrelevant, and trifling. But France was weary of battle, and unwilling to embark upon an unknown ocean of political experiment. It was no hour for a constituent assembly, with Russians and Austrians encamped in Paris, and so long as Napoleon was alive and near at hand an Imperial regency failed to offer guarantees of stability and peace. It was necessary, as Talleyrand observed, that the new régime should be founded on a principle, and the Bourbons relied on the principle of legitimacy.

Their restoration under adequate conditions would be a solemn pledge given to Europe that France was tired of adventure and would keep the peace. It was hoped that in a constitutional charter that troubled nation would at length be composed to rest.

The psychological current in European literature was setting strongly towards romance. The Middle Ages, which Voltaire could never understand because their superstition revolted his clear intelligence, began to exercise a fascination now that the practical evils of mediaevalism were satisfactorily abolished. Chateaubriand, the leader of the French Romantic Movement, portrayed in brilliant colours the aesthetic charms of the Christian cult, and startled the intelligence of well-bred ladies and gentlemen by the observation that the heroes and heroines of Racine were the products of Christian sentiment. The splendours of Church architecture, the beauty of Church music, the ordered charm of Christian ritual, and the simple majesty of Christian literature, such was the theme of his eloquent essay, so contemptible to the profound apologist, but so effective with a generation of romantic and intelligent infidels. The same pen addressed itself to commending the exiled dynasty which was now restored to France by

foreign bayonets. To the romance of the triumphant Empire the greatest living artist in the French language opposed the pathos of exile, a romance of bread eaten in sorrow by men who loved France and of whose devotion France had proved herself unworthy.

Sentiment failed to cluster round the fabric of the new dynasty. Louis XVIII was old, corpulent, and gouty, incapable of bestriding a horse, and destitute of any power of appeal to the soul of his people. His brother and heir, the Count of Artois, was a narrow-minded bigot, whose sinister influence gave matter for bitter suspicions. The dynasty had been put upon the French throne by foreign armies. Its success was connected with contracted frontiers and national humiliation, and its conduct gave good ground for thinking that it viewed the charter with dislike and would at some near date restore the *émigrés* to their land and the Church to its old position of endowed and intolerant predominance. With astonishing speed discontent spread through the country. In every village half-pay officers might be found, grumbling at the reduction of a great army to a peace establishment and at the restoration of the exiles to their former military rank. Was it true that these inglorious men who cheapened the

Legion of Honour, who closed the shops on Sunday, were intending to bring back the old régime, to steal the land from the peasant, and to restore the noble and the priest? A violent current of suspicion ran through France that such indeed was their design.

From his exile in Elba Napoleon had taken note of the new features on the horizon, of the recrudescence of the revolutionary hatred of priest and noble among the peasantry, of the chagrin of the old soldiers, of the power of the liberal opposition in Paris; and recognizing the altered mood of France, he determined to accommodate himself to it. In his miraculous progress from Grenoble to Paris he spoke everywhere as the Tribune of the people, as the champion of the Revolution settlement, as a professor of liberalism and peace. At Lyons he dissolved the Chamber of Peers, banished the *émigrés*, proscribed the royal flag and the white cockade. 'I come to deliver France from the emigrants. I am sprung from the Revolution. I am come to save the people from the slavery into which the priests and the nobles would plunge them. Let them beware, or I will string them up on the lantern.' Entering Paris on March 20, 1815, he said to Molé that he found the hatred of the priests and the nobility as

violent and as universal as it was at the beginning of the Revolution. Yet, however strong the Revolutionary forces might have been, his tradition, instinct, and political tact taught him that he must not rest upon the support of the mob. On the other hand, the public opinion of the capital forbade a return to absolutism. Every minister, every official, told Napoleon the same tale; that there must be guarantees for civil liberty, that the representatives of the nation must vote the taxes and the laws, that the ministers must be responsible to popular control, and that the Press must be free. The Bourbons had alienated the intellectual class because it was suspected that they intended to overthrow the charter, and France wished that the charter should be fairly tried. Napoleon bowed to the force of opinion, and after permitting the question of constitutional reform to be debated in a committee, summoned Benjamin Constant, the leader of the opposition to the Bourbons, and charged him with the duty of drawing up the charter of the liberal Empire. 'The nation,' he observed, 'wishes, or believes that it wishes, a tribune and assemblies. The government of the Bourbons, being feeble and antagonistic to the national interests, has accustomed these interests to defend themselves and

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to contest authority. The taste for political debates appears to have returned.'

Constant was a brilliant publicist, and had educated the political world of Paris in the theory and practice of constitutional government. No one had been a more formidable opponent of the Bourbons, no one had attacked the despotism of the Empire with more point and force than this mercurial politician, half dreamer, half *viveur*, who had served his rhetorical apprenticeship in the short-lived tribunate. The capture of Constant was the first overt token of the alliance between the forces of Bonapartism and liberalism which was destined to exert so powerful an influence on the history of Europe. His Constitution was not a revolutionary document, for it made place for an hereditary peerage, and on Napoleon's demand was christened *l'acte additionnel aux constitutions de l'empire*. But it was a liberal document. It broadened the electorate, freed the Press, dethroned the Roman Catholic Church from its position as a State religion, and secured the permanent control of the executive by the legislature. In the preamble, the history of the Empire was thrown into a new perspective and accommodated to the startling revolution in policy which the new mood of France had forced upon Napoleon. It was represented



that the work of the Empire had been addressed to the formation of a European federation into which it was proposed to introduce liberal principles. Unfortunately the continuance of war had rendered it necessary to adjourn the blessings of liberty, and the blindness of the monarchs and aristocrats of Europe resulted in the destruction of this great civilizing project. What had been done could not now be undone. The federation was a thing of the past and could not be reconstituted without a European war, which it did not belong to the intention of the Emperor to provoke. It was necessary, then, to acquiesce in the settlement which the overwhelming power of the coalition had imposed on France. Henceforth the Empire would stand for peace. On a smaller scale, but with undiminished and undeviating zeal, the Emperor would carry out those liberal projects from which the obstinate rage of English Tories had necessarily diverted him. His name should stand for the ideas of 1789, for peace and liberal institutions.

On June 18, 1815, towards midday, Chateaubriand strolled out of the ancient town of Gand by the Brussels gate, a copy of Caesar's Commentaries in his hands. He had left his sovereign, a crumpled, dejected, inglorious old gentleman.

quietly awaiting in some obscure lodging the issue of the campaign which was to decide the fortunes of his house. The sky was overcast, and still as with the premonition of advancing storms. Suddenly a sound was heard. The wanderer stopped, hesitated whether to go forward or return, then waited to listen again. The cry of a moorhen in the reeds broke the silence; then a bell sounded from a neighbouring church. He stepped forward, but had hardly advanced thirty paces when the rolling sound began again, now sharp and brief, now drawn out at unequal intervals. It was a roar of battle, not of thunder. 'I crossed the road,' he writes, 'and leant against a poplar at the corner of a field of barley, my face turned towards Brussels. A southerly wind brought the noise of artillery nearer to me. This great battle, still unnamed, whose echo I heard at the foot of a poplar, whose unknown funerals a village bell had sounded, was the battle of Waterloo.' Chateaubriand depicts in his memoirs the stream of emotions which passed through his being as he listened to the faint report of that tremendous tragedy. If the English won, his master would be restored to power; if they lost, he would be compelled to return to exile. 'Was it,' he asks, 'a new Crécy, a new Poitiers, a new Agincourt,

which the most implacable enemies of France were about to enjoy? If they triumphed, was not our glory lost? If Napoleon won, what became of our liberty? Though Napoleon's success meant life-long exile to me, the thought of my country filled my heart. My prayers were for the oppressor of France, that he might save our honour and rescue us from the dominion of the foreigner.'

There is no force in history more powerful than sentiment, and the defeat of Waterloo strengthened rather than weakened the sentiment of France for Napoleon. It might have been supposed that the cause of French imperialism was finally shattered by the wanton temerity and reckless egoism which had involved France in this hideous sacrifice. For a second time the country was given to understand that allegiance to Napoleon brought in its train foreign invasion and the loss of frontiers; and if chastisement can ever cure a people of political infatuation, France should assuredly have been cured of her infatuation for Napoleon. It seemed as if the story were now finally wound up. Napoleon himself was far away in a lonely island in the Atlantic, his infant son was under Austrian tutelage, his elder brother an exile, his wife the paramour of an Austrian general, and the other members of his family under close

police supervision. There was reason enough to suppose that Bonapartism was dead. So shrewd a judge as Metternich believed that Bonapartism was impossible without Bonaparte.

Napoleon judged otherwise. From his distant rock in the Atlantic he surveyed the course of European politics, and reckoned that a time would come when France, weary of unintelligent despotism, would revert to the principles upon which his government had been founded. 'The battle of Waterloo,' he said, 'has been as fatal to the liberties of Europe as the battle of Philippi was fatal to those of Rome'; and during the period of Metternich's influence there was sufficient truth in the proposition to nourish his hopes and to inspire his energies. He applied himself to the task of accommodating the history of his own career to the political tendencies which he judged to have a future before them. In this way he would serve the interests of the future head of his house.

The story of the St. Helena captivity has been generally treated as an episode of little historical but of much personal interest, and a library has collected around the relations of Napoleon and that honourable, pedantic, and unfortunate man, Sir Hudson Lowe. This is not the point of view from which to approach one of the important pas-

sages in European history. Napoleon at St. Helena possessed a rare opportunity, of which he took full advantage, of presenting himself in a favourable and pathetic light to the consideration of France and of Europe. 'Our situation here may even have its attractions,' he said to Las Cases; 'the universe is looking at us, we remain the martyrs of an immortal cause. Millions of men weep for us, and glory is in mourning. Adversity was wanting to my career. If I had died on the throne amidst the clouds of my omnipotence, I should have remained a problem to many men. To-day, thanks to my misfortune, they can judge of me naked as I am.' It was then his design, in the first place, to excite compassion by the tale of his sufferings at the hands of a brutal government and an inhuman jailer. That, as Las Cases admitted, was *la politique de Longwood*, and of the various ruses to which Napoleon descended it is not the most discreditable. But there were other more serious objects to be attained. During the Hundred Days Napoleon had begun, as we have seen, to arrange the retrospect of his life in such a way as to harmonize with the requirements of French liberalism. He had found France in a state of anarchy and given her institutions appropriate to her need. That had been the work of the Consulate.



Then turning his attention to obscurantist Europe, he had planned and partially carried out a federation of States, modern, enlightened, based on the principle of social equality, and revolving round France as the earth moves round the sun. That was the work of the Empire. Then he entered on a final stage, and in accordance with his original intentions had, upon his return from Elba, relaxed the severity of his autocratic rule. Moscow and Leipzig had shattered his beneficent plans for Europe, Waterloo had ruined the liberal Empire in France, but at St. Helena it would be possible to explain his intentions, to overcome criticism, to reveal the full majesty of his design. He was specially concerned to exhibit four propositions which the malignity and blindness of opponents had too often obscured. He stood for the Revolution, he defended the principle of nationality, he never deviated from his love of peace, he respected the influence of religion in society. In the wonderful conversations which were taken down by Las Cases and O'Meara, this is the theme of his apology.

In the first place, then, he is the representative of the ideas of '89, the Messiah of the Revolution, whose name would remain for ever the war-cry of democracy. 'I desired,' he said, 'to introduce



a system of general equality. I sought to establish a government which, though hard, should be a popular government.' 'It is,' he observed to O'Meara, 'because of this system of equality that your government detests me so much.' He had introduced equality before the law, recompensed merit, lowered the cost of education, opened the museums, governed in the interests of the whole community. The Imperial government was a kind of republic founded on common interests and designed to pacify faction. 'I did not usurp the throne ; I found it in the gutter, and the French people put it on my head.' Nor was his aristocracy a violation of the democratic principle : 'Every Frenchman could say under my reign, "I shall be a minister, a marshal of France, a grand officer of the Empire, duke, count, baron, if I deserve it ; even king."' The point of departure is no obstacle !' Anticipating that objection would be taken to his creation of a nobility, he was at special pains to defend it, as calculated to reconcile France with Europe, to fuse the old France with the new, and assist in effecting the disappearance of feudalism in Europe by attaching to the idea of nobility the conception of services rendered to the State. He argued again that he had not been unfaithful to liberty, the passion of

his youth. Much obloquy had been cast on him for his state prisons, but the eight 'Bastilles', as they were termed, contained only 243 prisoners for an Empire of forty million souls, agitated by foreign war and freshly issued from a terrible revolution. The annual inspections, made by Councillors of State who reported to the Privy Council of the Empire, precluded the possibility of arbitrary detention. The prisons were, in fact, not the contrivance of despotic caprice, but an act of liberalism and beneficence. Again, while his system of criminal justice secured to France as complete a measure of individual liberty as was enjoyed even by Englishmen, his desire for religious liberty was shown by his generous treatment of Protestants and Jews: the Hundred Days had proved his sympathy for the freedom of the Press. He denied that the Senate was servile, or that his institutions were calculated to encourage servility. The suppression of the Tribunal was defended as 'an important economy'. It was true that he had concentrated authority in his own hands; but when the right moment came he had always intended to unbend the bow. Education was, he explained, the necessary basis for constitutional liberties, and in 1799, when he rose to power, the French nation was uneducated.

‘The men who reproach me with not having given enough liberty to the French are ignorant of the fact that in 1804 ninety-six Frenchmen out of a hundred could not read.’ It is true that he had prolonged his dictatorship for fourteen years, but ‘the peril was always the same, the struggle bitter, and the crisis imminent’. But if peace had come, if the Russians had been conquered in 1812, ‘I would have associated my son in the Empire, my dictatorship would have ended, and my constitutional reign would have begun.’ Then local government would have been established, and all the filaments of centralized rule would have been sympathetically relaxed. ‘I worked in order that I might arrive at a plan. I asked for twenty years ; Destiny only gave me thirteen. I regarded myself as the Constituent of France.’

In the course of 1820 he dictated to Montholon the sketch of a Constitution for the reign of Napoleon II. In this curious and important document liberty of the Press is guaranteed ; the judges are irremovable ; and every Frenchman is permitted to bring an action before the ordinary courts against any agent of the Administration. The Chambers were granted the right of amendment and of legal initiative, as well as complete

control of foreign and domestic policy. If the Emperor dissolved the Chamber, another Assembly was to meet within twenty days. To prevent the corruption of the Assembly by the Court, it was provided that every deputy who accepted an office must resign his seat. The force of national movements in Spain and Germany had overthrown the Empire; but this, as Napoleon explains, was an error. Indeed, the principle of nationality could claim no more convinced champion than the man whom the nations of Europe had thrown to the ground. 'There are,' he said, 'in Europe more than thirty million Frenchmen, fifteen million Italians, thirty million Germans. I wished to make of each of these peoples a single nationality.' In Germany the difficulties were greatest, and the time required for the task of union was necessarily long. Napoleon had contented himself with simplifying 'the monstrous complication' of German political geography. Italy presented an easier and more attractive problem, and here the beneficent plan had been conceived with distinctness. He had always projected the unity of Italy, even when he partitioned Venice in 1797 and betrayed that free and famous city to the tender mercies of despotic Austria. 'The Venetians, the Lombards, the Piedmontese,

needed to be decomposed, and reduced into elements, to become Italians'; and so, too, the annexation of parts of Italy to the French Empire had been prompted by the desire 'to supervise, guarantee, and advance the national education of the Italians'. Napoleon was only awaiting the birth of a second son to proclaim the unity and independence of Italy. Ireland would have been separated from England and erected into an independent republic; the kingdom of Poland would have been restored, and would have served as a barrier against the deluge of northern barbarism. Spain and England were already endowed with political unity and independence; but in neither of these two countries was there social unity. Accordingly it was necessary to fashion the moral unity of these aristocratic regions, and to regenerate them by a drastic course of social reform. He would have abolished the English House of Lords, reformed the Commons, proclaimed liberty, equality, and popular sovereignty, and summoned Sir Francis Burdett to draw up a Constitution. So by degrees he would have fashioned a United States of Europe broad based upon the General Will.

Peace was necessary for the regeneration of Europe, and Napoleon had always wished for



peace. England, on the other hand, seeing that peace would make France a miracle of civilization and the metropolis of the world, had resolved the death of France. It was the English Cabinet which broke the Peace of Amiens and involved Europe in another decade of struggle. 'What a misfortune for Europe! The two great Powers, united together, would have fought for the diffusion of liberal ideas and the emancipation of peoples.' But the malignity and jealousy of Pitt had ordered it otherwise. Yet he bore no animus to the English. Speaking of what he would have accomplished in a successful invasion of the island, he added with sublime benignity, 'We should have demanded no sacrifices, no contributions. We should have presented ourselves not as conquerors but as brothers.'

His foreign policy, then, had for its aim the reorganization of Europe on liberal lines. For France he desired nothing beyond the line of her natural frontiers, the Rhine, the Alps, the Pyrenees. It was true that he had planted French princes in Spain, in Italy, in certain parts of Germany. But what did that matter? Politics were stronger than blood; the new thrones, founded on democratic and enlightened institutions, would have become the possession of the



peoples. The aim of the Russian war had been to deprive England of her last ally and to work the deliverance of Poland. Moderate as ever, he would have insisted on no hard terms in the event of victory. Russia should have been compensated at the expense of the Turks, and England should have kept Malta and her supremacy over the seas. He vehemently contested the sincerity of the overtures which were made at Dresden, at Frankfurt, and at Châtillon.

Finally, he was the friend of religion. He observed that the Catholic religion gave through the ceremony of consecration a religious, almost a sacred character to the sovereign, and that considerations of high policy recommended consecration by and amity with the Pope. He looked back with unfeigned satisfaction on the Concordat and on his policy of religious toleration. But while he was the friend of religion, he could not permit the Church to invade the territory of the State. The Jesuits, being a political order, should be abolished, while the interests of religion suffered from the temporal policy and the autocracy of the Pope. Divining the evil, he had prescribed a remedy. The Papal States had been confiscated, and the Pope, transferred to Paris and subjected to the control of ecclesiastical councils, would have lost

an ascendancy dangerous to the spiritual interests of the Church. Specially did he pride himself on having reopened the era of Church Councils. 'I should have had my religious sessions, as I had my legislative sessions; my Councils would have been the representation of Christianity; the Popes would have only been their presidents; I should have opened and closed the assemblies, approved and published their decisions as did Constantine and Charlemagne.'

Such was the spirit of the St. Helena conversations. As fragment after fragment passed across the ocean and sank into the popular mind, the legend took on the captivating form which it was designed that it should assume. The harsh features of the Napoleonic despotism were forgotten. Men thought of Napoleon as the soldier of the Revolution, as the misunderstood idealist whose liberal plans for France and Europe were shattered by a cruel destiny. The liberal middle class, who wished to shake down the autocracy of the Bourbons and to recover the Rhine frontier, began to regard him not as the man of Brumaire, but as the man of the Additional Act, as the suffering Prometheus of St. Helena. When in 1821 Las Cases explained to General Lamarque the liberal intentions of the Emperor, and added that he saw

in him one of his future marshals, that embodiment of militant liberalism was at once converted. The St. Helena conversations persuaded Armand Carrel, the brilliant opposition publicist, that Napoleon was a liberal; and as a liberal and a friend of the people he was celebrated in a hundred songs. The long histories of Thibaudreau and Thiers expounded to an admiring and receptive public the liberal and progressive elements which may undoubtedly be found in his policy. But nowhere were the main features of the legend presented with such an eye to their political relevance as in a small volume entitled *Napoleonic Ideas*, which appeared in the course of 1839. It was an able volume, clear, concise, well written, insisting upon the main principles with which by a singular transformation of historic truth the name of Napoleon had now become identified, the defence of liberal ideas, of nationalities, of religion. But its ability is not the essential point. It was the work of Louis Bonaparte, the Emperor's nephew, and, since the death of the Duke of Reichstadt, the head of the House of Bonaparte.

The political situation in France aided the coalition between the Bonapartists and the liberals. The country had failed to find peace in the constitutional settlement which had been imposed

upon it in 1815. The Restoration monarchy was unpopular, partly because it was brought in by foreign armies and partly because it was suspected of disloyalty to the Constitution and of sinister designs against the land sales of the Revolution. Even the leaders of clerical opinion found in the Concordat which the Legitimist government had accepted from Napoleon, matter for violent disagreement with the Crown. The most eloquent voice in the French Church during the critical period preceding and following the Revolution of 1830 was that of Lamennais, one of the founders of democratic ultramontane journalism. With the logic belonging to the temperament of fanaticism, Lamennais argues that the connexion of Church and State was fatal to spiritual freedom, and that the French State was founded upon the negation of God. Apprehending, what was indeed not difficult to detect, that the cause of Catholicism had been seriously injured by its connexion with the monarchy and the aristocrats, and convinced of the truth that the Gospel contained a liberating message to the hewers of wood and the drawers of water, Lamennais and his friends formulated the programme of Catholic democracy. His paper was condemned by the Curia, but his influence remained, and the fall of the Bourbons

of the elder branch was saluted with joy from a thousand pulpits.

The French nation had remained Napoleonic without being conscious of the fact. The machine of government was that same administrative engine which Napoleon had constructed, and no party in the State, with the exception of the aristocrats, really desired any measure of decentralization. The Government interfered with the elections and used its influence to promote the success of official candidates. The spectre of federalism which had ruined the Girondin party was sufficient to crush any attempt at enlarging the sphere of local liberty. The despotism of Bonaparte remained, and the only difference was that it was exploited by the *émigrés*. There was a high tariff against foreign goods, the agents of the administration were protected from prosecution in the ordinary law-courts, and the interests of education were completely neglected. The ill-fated dynasty succeeded in nothing that it did. It sent an army into Spain in 1823, and put back upon his throne one of the worst despots in Europe. But no glory was gained from the Spanish expedition, and much odium was collected from the prohibition of divorce and from the laws respecting sacrilege and the observance of Sunday. The spirit of the

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opposition is reflected in the songs of Béranger, with his loose, easy, high-spirited humour, his idealization of war, licence, and irreligion.

The July Monarchy, which was founded in 1830 on the support of the middle classes and as the result of a popular revolution, failed to reconcile the French people. Its policy abroad was inglorious, and in an age of swift economic progress it was stationary at home. No government of France has ever been so prosaic, so corrupt, and so timorous as this government of Louis Philippe, which was served by the greatest historian of his generation. The conquest of Algeria was an achievement of which France might have been proud, and it was hoped that the exploits of the Algerian army might compensate for the wise policy of non-intervention which had left the liberals of Belgium, Poland, and Italy unsuccoured in their hour of need. This, however, did not prove to be the case. There was only one subject which inflamed the imagination of France during the July Monarchy. It was the theme of poetry, from the pens of Lamartine and Hugo; of innumerable memoirs and histories and anecdotes: it was Napoleon. In 1840, when the bones of the great Emperor were brought back from St. Helena to find their resting place in



Paris, the sentiment of the people was so stirred that some onlookers remarked that the Second Empire was already made. Made it was in the imagination of the French peasantry, for whom Napoleon still lived as the restorer of altars, and the most glorious memory of the national wars. Even the members of the parliamentary opposition, whose horizon hardly stretched beyond the franchise, quivered at the name and unconsciously served the tradition. In the fiery Egyptian debates which shook the authority of the Government from 1839 to 1841, the shade of Napoleon rose again and again to confront the counsels of prudence, and was only beaten in the divisions. Mehemet Ali was an Albanian adventurer who sought to carve himself an empire after the manner of Orientals ; but to the fevered imagination of the Palais Bourbon he appeared to be the disciple of Napoleon, the man who was destined to undo the disaster of the Nile and the repulse at Acre, and to restore to France the dominion of Egypt, which the sword of Napoleon had prepared for her. To leave the finest surviving soldier of the First Empire without support was treason to a great memory and the repudiation of a brilliant past ; and in Paris, where tongues are quick and passions lively, the avoidance of a war

on behalf of Mehemet was denounced as a national humiliation. In truth, the Government could neither touch the heart nor amuse the idle fancy of France. '*La France s'ennuie*' was the fatal criticism passed by Lamartine on the rule of the Bourgeois King, who, in lieu of glory and adventure, had provided for his country a diet of timid common sense. In the eyes of the artisans the crimes of the Government were of a darker hue. It had shot down the Lyons silk weavers in 1834; whenever or wherever revolution or Socialism had burst out, it had shown no weakness or delay. Sensible of failing repute, the Government attempted to cure Bonapartism by homoeopathic methods, as if an idea or sentiment can be extinguished by encouraging great men to give it artistic expression. At last a movement for parliamentary reform brought on the crisis, and in February, 1848, the monarchy of the younger branch went down, so suddenly, and with so little lamentation or defence, that the marvel is that a tree so feebly rooted should so long have defied the gathering storm.

## V

LOUIS BONAPARTE, the nephew of Napoleon, was the third son of Louis, the ex-King of Holland, and his wife Hortense Beauharnais. He was born in 1808, recollected having seen his illustrious uncle before the battle of Waterloo, and was carefully educated in the Napoleonic cult. Lord Malmesbury, meeting him at his mother's house in Rome in 1829, found him already persuaded that it was his destiny to rule over France. He was then twenty-one years of age, a finished but reckless horseman, giving little indication of ability or knowledge, but high-spirited, and surrounded by a nimbus of madcap generals who had served under the great Napoleon. His mother's house in Rome was a centre of nationalist politics, and in 1831 Louis Bonaparte, together with Charles Napoleon, his elder surviving brother, took part in the rising in the Romagna which came to so swift and unsatisfactory a conclusion. The French Revolution of 1830 prompted him to enter into relations with the Republican chiefs in Paris, and in the following year, by the death of the Duke of Reichstadt, he became heir to the Imperial claims.

Henceforward he began to study politics, and impressed Chateaubriand as 'studious, instructed, full of honour, and naturally grave, awaiting in the silence of exile the liberation of his country'. The Revolution of 1830 had been partially led by Bonapartists, and Louis Bonaparte was convinced that but for an untimely accident it would have resulted in the re-establishment of the Imperial dynasty. On two separate occasions he attempted to appeal from the Government of France to the people and the army. In 1836 he was taken red-handed at Strasburg, having failed to suborn the garrison. In 1840, an enterprise carried out with a similar lack of circumspection failed ignobly at Boulogne. These disastrous miscarriages were sufficient to ruin a reputation. Louis Bonaparte had not only grossly miscalculated the elementary conditions of success, but he had appeared in a ridiculous and melodramatic light as a hare-brained adventurer. Nevertheless there is something impressive in the pertinacity of his fatalism, and in the skill with which, when placed upon his trial in 1840, he contrived to define his political position. 'One last word, gentlemen. I represent before you a principle, a cause, and a defeat. The principle is the sovereignty of the people; the cause, that of the Empire; the defeat, Waterloo.

You have recognized the principle, you have served the cause, you wish to avenge the defeat.' He maintained that he desired not to bring about an Imperial restoration, but to convoke a national congress which should decide upon the political destinies of France.

The sentence passed upon the adventurer was imprisonment in the castle of Ham. The Government of Louis Philippe had been over-generous to him after the affair of Strasburg, and even now was not ungenerous. It permitted him to receive visitors, to keep a valet, to walk in the garden, and to ride in the castle court. Imprisonment gave time for study, and Lord Malmesbury, who visited Ham in 1845, was struck by the fact that, despite five years of close confinement, his mind was full and active, and his conviction of ultimate success as firm as ever. He composed a pamphlet on the extinction of pauperism by means of a scheme for the reclamation of waste land by state-aided agricultural colonies. He wrote a protectionist treatise on the sugar question, contributed articles to a local newspaper on military reform, and was full of a project for a Nicaraguan canal. Divining with no little perspicacity the trend of public opinion, he talked to Louis Blanc with a sympathetic air of the prospects of Socialism.



advertised himself as the friend of the poor and as the possessor of various patents for the relief of poverty. His uncle had, as he had already explained in his work on Napoleonic ideas, designed to introduce liberal changes into his Government. He would complete his uncle's work by a well-connected scheme of social reform. In 1847 he escaped from prison in the guise of a workman, and reappeared in London in time to enroll himself as a special constable during the Chartist riots. His appearance was not impressive. His legs were short, his eye dull, his face curiously inexpressive. His mother had described him as soft and obstinate, and his friend Mrs. Gordon told Louis Blanc that he had upon her the effect of a woman. To many he appeared dreamy, reserved, opaque. He was known to be given to dissipation, and yet so destitute was he of the dash and animation which belonged to the French temperament, that scandal doubted his parentage and invented for his father a Dutch admiral.

The Revolution of February, 1848, which shook down the throne of Louis Philippe, provided an incomparable opportunity to a political adventurer. A servile war had followed upon a political agitation for parliamentary reform, a revolt of the 'have-nots' against the 'haves' which threatened



property and all the foundations of civilized life. As early as 1846, Heine, strolling through the Quartier St. Marceau, was struck with the ferocious literature which appeared to be the pabulum of the Paris workman. There were cheap reprints of the most sanguinary speeches of Marat and Robespierre, as well as the literature of Socialism, of which Louis Blanc's *Organisation du travail* was the most influential manifestation. The terror which the social Revolution inspired cannot easily be overestimated. In the country districts many a peasant was well content that Louis Philippe should go, but thought it intolerable that France should be governed by the reds of Paris. The assembly which was sent to the capital to draft a constitution was conservative to the backbone, and the fear of Socialism which seized every peasant proprietor in France gave Louis Napoleon the opportunity for which he was waiting. At the first tidings of the Revolution he had crossed the Channel, but then, learning that his presence was inconvenient, discreetly returned to London. His name began to work miracles. Twice he was elected to the Constituent Assembly, but twice refused to take his seat; then being chosen by five Departments he accepted the mandate, and showed himself to the men

who were drawing up the constitution of the Second Republic. His first speech, delivered, it was said, with a German accent, was hesitating and bad. 'I thought,' said Thouret, 'this man was dangerous; after hearing him I withdraw my amendment.'

The man was dangerous. The Constituent Assembly devised a Republican constitution which could only lead to a dictatorship. On the one hand, there was to be a legislature, elected by universal suffrage; on the other hand, a President deriving his authority independently from the same ultimate and original source of sovereign power. Since the President would control the centralized administrative mechanism and the armed forces of the country, he would during his four years of office be in a position of commanding pre-eminence. When the question of the presidency was submitted to the electorate, Louis Bonaparte was returned at the head of the poll with more than five million votes. Some of the peasants who voted for him believed that he was the great Napoleon himself. Every one at least knew his name. He obtained the suffrage of all who dreaded the red spectre of Socialism, the Legitimists and Orleanists, the Bonapartists and the Catholics. He stood as the candidate of the

peasantry and the army, as the heir of a great tradition, as the pledge of vague, unmeasured aspirations. 'How should I not vote for this gentleman,' said a peasant to Montalembert, 'I whose nose was frozen at Moscow?' Lamartine the poet, orator, and historian, who had saved France in the crisis of 1848, polled no more than eighteen thousand votes. Cavaignac had crushed the Socialists in Paris during the days of June and had earned a tribute of gratitude from all who value order and liberty; Ledru-Rollin represented the principle of social democracy; but all the Republican votes together did not exceed two million. Bonaparte had easily eclipsed his rivals. To understand his success, we must think, as Treitschke reminds us, of the songs which the peasant women of France had sung at their looms, and of the cottage walls hung with cheap lithographs of the triumphs and the paladins of the Napoleonic wars. The situation created in the spring of 1849 was extraordinary. The first Assembly which met under the new Republican constitution was a body of men which did not even wish for a republic. Universal suffrage had returned a Monarchist majority, and the Republicans were compelled to the conclusion that the errors of universal suffrage should be corrected by force. The constitution

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provided that a three-fourths majority was necessary to decree constitutional revision, and, with the exception of a small minority, every one wished to revise the constitution—the Prince President, that he might prolong his term of office; the Legitimists and Orleanists, that they might crown their respective candidates; the social democrats, that they might extend the popular principle. Yet opinion was too sharply divided to admit of the requisite majority, and in order to reform the constitution it became necessary to violate it.

With a greater supply of commanding energy the Prince President might easily have wrecked his cause, and at this great crisis of his fortunes he was helped by his principal defect, a certain irresolute languor of will. He was silent and reserved in Paris, and his rare attempts to intervene in the current of parliamentary politics were favourably contrasted in the public mind with the febrile activities of the Assembly. Every month added to his reputation and detracted from that of his adversaries. The Assembly, stricken with the fear of democracy, muzzled the Press, prohibited public meetings, and disfranchised three million citizens. The President, on the other hand, toured through the country, protested that he was the friend of the workman, and that nothing

would induce him to violate the forms of the constitution. Being possessed of control over the army and the executive, he was in reality master of France, and the conduct of the legislature had equipped him with apologies should he decide to use force. He could say, as he said to his friend Lord Malmesbury, that he had tried in vain to form a coalition ministry and to effect a fusion of parties, and that parliamentary agitation stood in the way of social reform. From an Assembly which had disfranchised three million voters and voted itself a gratuity of twenty-five francs a day, he could appeal to the democracy of France. Yet he hesitated with a not unnatural hesitation. He felt solitary. When he first came to France in 1848 he was not known to fifty persons, and he had a talent for distrusting and for inspiring distrust. The *Coup d'État*, executed on December 2, 1851, the anniversary of Austerlitz, was imparted only to five confidants.

Uncle and nephew established themselves in the government of France by a *Coup d'État*, but whereas the days of Brumaire were bloodless, the days of December left memories which France has not yet expunged from the tablets of her heart. The plot of Brumaire was so clumsily contrived that it nearly miscarried ; the plot of December

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was a miracle of craft and force such as would have approved itself to the judgement of Cesare Borgia. Yet Brumaire was forgiven in the greatness of the achievements to which it was the prelude, while the bloodstain of December proved to be indelible. We must not take our history from Victor Hugo or Gambetta, from *L'Histoire d'un Crime* or *Napoléon le Petit* or *Les Châtiments*, but the state of mind of which these famous pieces of invective were the product was part of the spiritual current in French history.

A cry of execration rose up in England.

If you be fearful, then must we be bold,

Our Britain cannot salve a tyrant o'er.

Better the waste Atlantic roll'd

On her and us and ours for evermore.

What! have we fought for freedom from our  
prime

At last to dodge and palter with a public crime?

So wrote Tennyson, addressing the legislators of England.

The 'public crime' was condoned in France. There it was felt that the President stood between the State and anarchy; that his severities had crushed a vast socialistic conspiracy, and that there was no alternative but to register his will. The *plébiscite* made him President for ten years and



confirmed the principles of an autocratic constitution framed upon the avuncular model. The President was given sole power over army and navy. It was he who exercised all the patronage, named the members of the Council of State and the Senate, had the sole right of initiating, sanctioning, and promulgating laws, of summoning, proroguing, and dissolving the legislature. In the fullest and most absolute sense he was the master of France. The legislature of 251 members, though elected for six years by universal suffrage, was not only debarred from initiating laws ; it was forbidden to debate the Address, to interpellate ministers, to overthrow a ministry. It was indeed permissible to proffer amendments, but these the Council of State was not obliged to accept and was in the habit of systematically disregarding. No measure which could be taken to reduce the importance of the body was left unexplored. There was no tribune ; no reporting, save for dry and condensed official summaries in the official paper. The aspect of the Palais Bourbon had indeed changed. The profession of the rhetorician was gone. How could his spirit play as he rose from his seat to address three government officials seated in their gold braid above the thin and dispirited assembly ? Montalembert,

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the great Zouave of Catholicism, approved the *Coup d'État* as necessary to save France from the abyss ; but the restrictions upon the exercise of his rhetorical talents drove him into opposition.

It is never wise to forget the ugly features of such a despotism as that which Napoleon now set up in France—the debasement of the bar and the bench, the oppression exercised by the officials, the cynical immorality of the Court, the absence of large and generous principles in public life. In palliation it may be said that the country itself seemed to care little for parliamentary forms or the freedom of the Press, and was unmoved by the unscrupulous pressure exerted by the Government at elections. The Chamber was for the most part inexperienced and docile, for the eminent Bonapartists sat in the Senate and the more laborious members of the party were summoned to the Council. As the great issues were removed from the sphere of legislative responsibility, personal jealousies filled the vacuum. ‘The present régime,’ wrote De Tocqueville, ‘is the paradise of the envious and the mediocre.’ The intellect of France had been warned off the course, the politicians took refuge in letters, and only in the veiled references of the savants of the Institute could the most cultured city in the world

taste the subtle delight of delicate and forbidden criticism.

The substitution of the Empire for the Presidency was the work of less than a year, prefaced by many petitions and brought to a head by a triumphal progress through France. On October 9, 1852, at a banquet given by the Chamber of Commerce at Bordeaux, Louis Bonaparte proclaimed the Empire, adding the significant words, '*L'Empire c'est la Paix.*' The French nation, being consulted for the third time, for the third time by an overwhelming majority ratified its belief in Bonapartism. On December 1, 1852, the Prince President was proclaimed Emperor under the title Napoleon III.

The programme of the Empire was not the improvisation of a vulgar adventurer, but the result of long reflection on the Napoleonic tradition and on the best means of adapting it to the needs of France. 'The name Napoleon,' so ran the message of October 31, 1849, 'is a complete programme in itself; it stands for order, authority, religion, the welfare of the people within; without, for national dignity.' Napoleon professed himself to be the elect of the people, and ready to abandon his prerogatives at their desire. It was necessary that he should begin his career as Emperor by depriving the country of that exercise

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of political liberty which in his judgement had been so fatal to France ever since the battle of Waterloo; but by degrees he would limit his prerogatives and admit the nation to a share in government. Like his uncle, he had come not to suppress but to adjourn the reign of political freedom and to educate the French people in the art of combining self-government, progress, and order.

The Napoleonic idea, as he had already explained, stood not for war but for peace. 'I have,' he said at Bordeaux, October 9, 1852, 'like the Emperor, conquests to make. Like him, I wish to draw into the stream of the great popular river those hostile side-currents which tend to lose themselves without profit to any one. . . . I wish to conquer for religion, morality, and prosperity, that part of the population, still so numerous, which in the midst of a country of faith and belief scarcely knows the precept of Christ, which in the heart of the most fertile country in the world can scarcely enjoy the prime necessities of its produce. We have immense districts of virgin soil to clear, roads to open, harbours to dig, rivers to render navigable, canals to finish, our network of railways to complete. Opposite to Marseilles there is a vast kingdom waiting to be assimilated to France. Our great ports of the West must be

brought near to the American continent by the rapidity of the commerce we have yet to create. We have everywhere ruins to restore, false gods to overthrow, truths to establish in triumph. That is how I should understand the Empire, if the Empire is to be re-established.'

A despotism requires a despot. Napoleon III possessed the capacity of delineating spacious projects in elevated language; but his physical constitution, never of the strongest, failed him in the middle of his career, and with the advance of illness his will became increasingly infirm. He was a man of kindly feelings, courteous, at times charming, but neither in public nor in private morals free from grave reproach. The epicurean temperament is not favourable to the growth of deep affections, and Ollivier, who knew Napoleon well, reports that few sovereigns have been so impersonal as he. A certain stoic courage, a coolness in the hour of danger, were the complementary merits which balanced the absence of high vehemence and warm imagination. He had a certain gift of political perspective, and could paint on the canvas of the future with a bold sweep of the brush; but his figures had no anatomy, and were like the creations of the dilettante artist who has excused himself from the tough



and technical discipline of his craft. His judgement was unsteady, his head full of untested, fanciful, and contradictory policies; his capacity unequal to the execution of his opaque and fluctuating designs. Having obtained power by a conspiracy, he was compelled to conspire in order to maintain it, and being unable, partly through the haziness of his intelligence and partly through the infirmity of his will, to apprehend the essential discord of opposing ideals, he harboured the strangest miscellany of convictions, despotic, revolutionary, philanthropic, and liberal. A crooked vein of diffidence shot through the stiff substance of his fatalism, and as he distrusted himself and even openly expressed regrets and misgivings, so he distrusted those around him. The diplomatists of the Empire frequently found that their master was diplomatizing behind their back, and that their counsels were thrown aside in obedience to some cross-current of unofficial influence. Such a master is not well served. In a centralized state the malady of the commanding will spreads through every vein of the body politic.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Thus Persigny was for the English, Morny for the Russian, and Drouyn for the Austrian alliance. Walewsky, though Foreign Minister at the time, was kept in ignorance of the pact made at Plombières between Napoleon and Cavour. Persigny and Pélissier, successively Ambassadors



There is a curious sketch of a novel written in the Emperor's hand and discovered among his papers at the Tuileries in 1870. A certain M. Benoist, an honest grocer, goes to America in 1847, and after a voyage from the Hudson to the Mississippi returns to France in 1868. Only distant echoes had reached him of what was going on in his native country. Some French exiles had told him that his country was groaning under the iron heel of despotism, and that, having left it flourishing under Louis Philippe, he would find it impoverished and abased. He returns full of these sinister apprehensions, and is confronted with a series of surprises. 'What are these hideous black vessels?' he asks, as he puts into the port of Brest. He is told that they are the new ironclads, the invention of the Emperor. He sees a crowd pressing towards the mairie, and learns to his astonishment that his enslaved country possesses a legislature, and that the legislature is elected by universal suffrage. The electric telegraph, the network of railways, the embellishment of Paris, strike him at once as great and impressive strides in civilization. He finds that the cost of living has been lowered owing

at the Court of St. James, astonished Prince Albert by their frank criticisms of their master's policy.—Ollivier, iii, pp. 121-6.

to a wise treaty of commerce, that imprisonment for debt is abolished, that the penal code is no longer defaced by the barbarous penalty of branding, that strikes have been legalized, that provision is made for the aged poor and for infirm priests, and that the pay of the army is augmented. These and other improvements have been effected without violence or tyranny. He expects to hear that the prisons are full of authors, and learns that he is in error, and that in Imperial France there are neither riots nor political prisoners nor exiles.

This represents the strong side of the Emperor's policy. He had a genuine feeling for the people, and was shrewd enough to see that a programme of social and economic reform might compensate the country for the severe repression of the Republican and Orleanist parties. Clerical prejudice has minimized the admirable work done by Duruy, his Minister of Education ; but on all hands it is allowed that Napoleon gave a great impetus to the construction of railways, which Thiers had denounced as the costly luxury of the rich ; that by the foundation of the *Crédit Foncier* he brought capital into agriculture ; that he drew attention to the necessity of improving out of the public funds the condition of workmen's dwellings in

town and country ; that he founded benefit societies and almshouses ; and that his visit to Algeria was productive of great improvements in the finance of the colony and in the relations of the French to the native population. It is he and Baron Haussmann who have made the clean, airy, brilliant Paris which we know. It was a drastic, unpopular, salutary process, affronting old prejudices, and disturbing pleasant, familiar ways of life. Who would not prefer the picturesque old rookery built under Louis-Quinze, and hallowed by long family memories, to the new boulevard, bright and staring, planned by a big, loose-jointed, harsh-featured man with long whiskers and a German name ?

The first four years of the Empire were marked by steady material progress. The Emperor had been recognized by foreign Powers, and in conjunction with England had carried to a successful conclusion a war for the preservation of the integrity of Turkey. At the Congress of Paris held at the conclusion of the Crimean campaign, Napoleon appeared as the arbiter of Europe. He then stood at the summit of his fortune. He had represented the Crimean war correctly enough as conceived in the traditional vein of French diplomacy. It was to the advantage of France

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that Russia should not be the predominant influence in Constantinople, for to rule in Constantinople was to rule in the Mediterranean, and the Mediterranean was as much a French as an English interest. He had defended the rights of the Latin Church in the East, and accumulated a treasury of merit with the Vatican from which he intended to make long drafts. After an unpopular and ignoble peace France had emerged once more warlike and victorious, the leader of a crusade, the champion of the Latin Church, the defender of the sacred places of Palestine. The brilliance of the Imperial Court, the solicitude which the Emperor displayed for the condition of the people, combined with the peace and order which his government had secured, seemed to promise a prolonged period of uncontested and beneficent rule. His marriage with a beautiful Spanish lady had been welcome to the Catholic party, and the birth of a son was an additional touch to his prosperity. If Napoleon III had been content to act upon the maxim which he enunciated at Bordeaux and to keep the peace, it is probable that his dynasty might still be reigning in France. Unfortunately for himself, he was so far possessed of the Napoleonic tradition as to desire to reverse the treaties of 1815

and to promote the cause of nationalities. He told Lord Cowley early in his reign that 'he was determined not to fall as Louis-Philippe had done by an ultra-pacific policy; that he knew well that the instincts of France were military and domineering, and that he was resolved to gratify them'. Revolutionary schemes of foreign policy floated like storm-driven clouds across the surface of his unquiet spirit. Among Lord John Russell's papers there is a document purporting to be a translation of a series of questions issued by Napoleon III on the possibility of a French expedition conquering and holding Australia. He threw out hints to Spain, that he might view without displeasure an invasion of Portugal, if Catalonia were ceded to France. He pressed England not once but twice to make the restoration of Poland a *sine qua non* of peace with Russia. Against the advice of Thouvenel, his ambassador at Constantinople, and despite the unconcealed opposition of Persigny, his envoy in London, he advocated the union of Moldavia and Wallachia under a foreign prince, who might shape an independent Roumanian nation. On a visit to Osborne he took occasion to suggest to Prince Albert a vast redistribution of power on the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean. Spain might take Morocco.



England might annex Egypt, Austria might find compensation for certain losses in Europe by the acquisition of part of Syria. By a hint here and a hint there he sowed in the minds of the diplomats of Europe the conviction that he was determined to upset the map and enlarge the boundaries of France. In his own cloudy intelligence there was always one burning question—the liberation of Italy. The problem was fatally bound up with the destinies of his house, for Italian policy marked the first stage in the road which led to the cataclysm of the Empire.

The Italian question was one of peculiar delicacy. The unity of Italy demanded not only the expulsion of Austria from Lombardy and Venice, but the expulsion of the Bourbons from Naples and Sicily and the abolition of the temporal power of the Papacy. The question was intimately bound up with French party feeling. The Radicals, led by Prince Napoleon, the Emperor's nephew, were vehemently attached to the cause of Italian liberation, and were prepared, largely through the influence of Manin, and his friend Henri Martin the historian, to accept liberation at the hands of the Piedmontese monarchy. The Clericals, on the other hand, would not hear of any interference with the Papal dominion, and,



in deference to their wishes, Napoleon, when President of the Republic, had dispatched a French force to crush the Roman democracy, and to restore the Pope to his former power. He could not, then, without contradicting his earlier policy, consent to the evacuation of Rome by the French troops who had been dispatched to defend the Pope against the surging tide of Italian democracy. Nor again could the Imperial Government acquiesce in the expulsion of the Bourbons from Naples without grave offence to the Legitimist party, and Napoleon specially desired to seduce the Legitimists from their allegiance to the white flag. The problem, therefore, before the French Emperor was by no means simple. He wished to expel Austria from North Italy, to aggrandize Piedmont, and to indemnify France for her assistance by the annexation of Savoy. But while throwing this sop to the Nationalist and Radical parties of France, he must take care not to offend the Clericals and Legitimists. He conceived, therefore, of an Italy liberated from Austria and constituted as a federation under the nominal suzerainty of the Pope, an Italy containing as its main elements the kingdom of Naples, the Papal States, and a Piedmont stretching from the Alps to the Adriatic. It is significant of his

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divided will that he retained Walewsky at the head of his Foreign Office, though he knew him to be of the Clerical persuasion and opposed to the advancement of Piedmont. This was an idle dream. Napoleon underrated the strength of the national feeling in Italy, and overrated the power of France to contain it within bounds. His whole course of action was calculated to secure for France the minimum of advantage and for himself the maximum of odium. He encouraged Count Cavour to lay before the Congress of Paris in 1856 a reasoned statement of the abuses prevailing in the Papal States, with a view to exciting the indignation of Europe against an indefensible anachronism. Then, two years later, meeting the great statesman very secretly at Plombières, he pledged himself to assist Piedmont if she were attacked by Austria, and to extend her borders to the Adriatic. The war broke out in 1859, and directly led to the unification of Italy under Victor Emmanuel.

The land of Dante owes more than it is willing yet to acknowledge to the Third Napoleon. He gave the shock which set the revolutionary forces in motion; he raised the wind and reaped the whirlwind. The formation of a united Italian kingdom was, as he bitterly confessed, no political

gain to France, but this was only one of the inconveniences which resulted from his descent upon the Lombard plain. The war had been vehemently opposed in his own family and at his own Council board. The Empress, with the fervour of a Spanish Catholic, resisted an undertaking calculated to humiliate the Pope ; while in the eyes of the official world it was the height of imprudence to encourage the revolutionary elements in Italy. England might afford to be revolutionary abroad and conservative at home ; in France such a combination was justly regarded as a dangerous paradox. The Catholic soldiery distrusted the policy of the enterprise. 'The descendants of Brennus,' observed Mérimée, 'are hardly in the humour to take the capital, even if it were only guarded by their ancient enemies the geese.' The French Emperor had succeeded in alienating everybody and in creating round himself a deep atmosphere of distrust. He had suddenly made peace with the Austrians when the Piedmontese believed themselves to be on the brink of a crowning triumph. He had first encouraged, then essayed to damp the revolutionary movement in the Central Provinces. Finally, as the price of his consent to their annexation, he had exacted Nice and Savoy from Piedmont.

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Fiery was the wrath, deep and legitimate the suspicion, with which Italian patriots regarded his vacillating course. Excitement reckes not of perplexities, and Italy never trusted him again.

Even before the outbreak of the Italian war, Napoleon had not altogether pleased the Clericals. He had declined to relax the irksome tutelage of the Organic Articles ; the civil marriage was maintained ; nor would he permit to the Catholics that measure of educational control for which their political leaders were striving. But now he had completely lost the clerical allegiance. He had permitted one of his publicists to write against the temporal dominion of the Pope ; he had sanctioned the incorporation of the Romagna, which was one portion of that dominion, in the Italian kingdom, and had permitted Edmond About to cover the Papal administration with his brilliant and pointed ridicule. The conquest of Naples by Garibaldi, and the defeat of a Papal force led by a French officer at Castelfidardo, filled the Catholic and royalist world with passionate indignation ; and a new Vendée organized itself under the shadow of the Vatican. And while he had thus lost the support of the great conservative connexion in France, his diplomacy had excited grave distrust among the Powers of Europe. England

sympathized with the cause of Italian liberation, but could not forgive the exaction of Savoy and Nice as the price of French assistance. Palmerston revised his favourable estimate, and discovered in Napoleon a profound and inextinguishable desire to humiliate and punish this country ; the Prince Consort was full of anxieties for the Rhine. The extension of the French boundary to the Alps seemed to betoken ulterior designs of the darkest nature. What if the Emperor should be meditating the recovery of the great 'natural' frontier which the ambition of his uncle had lost to France? Every Radical orator under Louis Philippe had clamoured for the reversal of the humiliating treaties which the sovereigns of Europe had imposed upon the restored monarchy of France. The man who had seized Nice and Chambéry would strike next at Antwerp. There was good ground for suspicion. The Regent of Prussia, who detested the Italian revolution, and had mobilized his army in 1859, believed in French designs on Belgium and the Rhine, and steadily pushed on his military preparations.

As the Italian war alienated the Clericals, so the treaty of commerce with England in 1860 estranged the manufacturers. Napoleon had been convinced by the logic of free-trade economics,

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and believed that by a series of commercial treaties he would be able to secure a great extension of French industry and commerce. His motives, however, were not purely scientific. He reckoned that a treaty with England would tend to dispel any clouds of dissatisfaction which might have collected over Savoy. He was aware indeed that, with the exception of the wine-growers of the South, industrial opinion was totally unprepared for such a reduction of duties as that which was embodied in the famous treaty of commerce which he drew up in concert with Richard Cobden. Nevertheless he carried through the negotiations secretly, swiftly, and in defiance of public opinion. He knew that he wanted the goodwill of England, and he believed that France would come to admit that a lowering of the tariff wall between the two great countries was all to her advantage. When Cobden told him of the statue to Peel with its inscription, 'He bettered the lot of the labouring and suffering classes by lowering the price of the necessaries of life', the Emperor said that that was the reward which he coveted most, but that unfortunately in France they made revolutions and did not know how to make reforms.

Having estranged the Clericals and the manufacturers, Napoleon turned to the support of the



Liberals. It had been part of his original design to relax the tension of despotism when his power was thoroughly established, and by degrees to associate the representatives of the people in the task of government ; and this idea was now commended to him not only by his own failure of physical health, but also by the desire of conciliating an important body of political opinion.

He had now undertaken two campaigns in Europe, as well as minor expeditions to China and Syria, and was, with part of his mind at least, prepared for a spell of Olympian quiet. The chief military lesson of the Italian war had been the need for administrative decentralization, and Marshal Randon, with the concurrence of the Emperor, had plotted out a scheme somewhat on the plan from which Roon and Moltke derived such splendid results for Prussia. But meanwhile, the finances of France had been gravely embarrassed by the Crimean and Italian wars. Two milliards of francs had been added to the Debt ; the deficit was chronic and retrenchment imperative. Considerations of economy had to be weighed against a project of military reform which involved fresh outlays. Doubt and hesitation began to invade the Emperor's mind. Could not the army wait ? Was this scheme really urgent ? Would not fresh

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military expenditure be construed as a menace to the peace of Europe? It was at this moment that the King of Prussia had embarked upon a struggle with the Prussian Chamber over the very question of army reform ; and Napoleon, his mind already filled with a preordained plan of gracious concessions to the liberal spirit, had no desire to throw a gratuitous apple of discord into the parliamentary arena. He shrank from an unpleasant passage of arms with his subjects. He had no Bismarck at his elbow to bid him spurn the professors of economy and peace and freedom. So putting aside the heroic but expensive measure which he judged to be essential to military efficiency, he turned his attention to the composition of a life of Julius Caesar. The good tidings of this pacific employment would compose the disquieted spirits in Europe, show that the Imperial sword was sheathed, and that the liberal reign had begun.

The book was to be a symptom of a new era. Napoleon was serious in his belief that, having nursed the Empire through the perils of childhood, he could afford to relax his vigilance. By a scheme of gradual concessions he would educate France in the right use of political liberty, let fresh air into the Constitution, devolve and distribute the crushing weight of parental respon-

sibility. He would proceed cautiously, watch the effect of his graduated bounty, enjoy the harvest of confidence and popularity which ripens under the sunshine of unsolicited generosity. The spectacle of an autocrat spontaneously disarming would be a touching demonstration of careless strength and liberal wisdom. There was nothing in such a course incompatible with the root ideas of Bonapartism; it had been foreshadowed in the Additional Act, in the St. Helena conversations, in the manual of Napoleonic ideas with which Louis Bonaparte made his literary name. On the 22nd of November, 1860, the Imperial historian read a decree to his Cabinet and Privy Council which altered the autocratic Constitution of 1852 in certain material respects. The Senate and the legislative body were permitted to vote and debate an annual Address in response to the Speech from the Throne, and though responsible government was still withheld, it was at least intended that the Chambers should know what the Government was doing. By the Constitution of 1852, ministers of the Crown were excluded from the Chambers. It was now provided that certain ministers without portfolio should be charged with the duty of explaining and defending the measures of the Government in the legislature. Finally, the

publication of full shorthand reports of parliamentary debates was sanctioned. By these concessions the Emperor revived parliamentary life in France. He invited the Chambers every year to traverse the whole surface of Imperial policy, permitted a running criticism of the executive, and enormously increased the power of the Opposition in the country by allowing parliamentary oratory to be fully reported.

At the beginning of the Empire Guizot had prophesied that it would soon lose its influence over the intellectual classes in France. Writing to Reeve on the 25th of December, 1851, he says: 'The upper classes who are interested in politics, Legitimists, Orleanists, or Republicans, will not oppose the Empire now, because they fear Socialism and the Jacquerie. But that will pass away, and then the recollection of affronts received, of liberty lost, ill-will and disdain, and party spirit, everything which renders the upper classes ungovernable, will reappear.' This prophecy was now about to be fulfilled. During the first years of the Empire the undoubted services rendered by the Government, its suppression of anarchy, the glory which it had achieved in the Crimean war, and the expansion of industry and commerce which had followed as the result not

only of increased security, but also of the improvement in the railway system, the steamship service, and the mechanism of credit, had silenced the voice of detraction. But now, when the Emperor was busy over the excavation of Alesia, and discussing minute points of antiquarianism with learned men, the storm began to beat up against the fabric which seemed so imposing. The Orleanists did not forgive the decree which had confiscated the private estates of the Orleanist princes; the Legitimists were full of passionate anger at the expulsion of the Bourbon house from Naples; Liberal Catholics like Dupanloup combined with narrow ultramontanes like Pie, Bishop of Poitiers, to denounce the Emperor in pamphlets and episcopal charges; while a Liberal opposition in the legislative chamber was now invited to criticize the unsatisfactory finances, and to clamour for a larger measure of public liberty and public control than that which the Emperor had accorded. The story of the Empire during its last decade is a story of continuous decline, of unwise and ruinous diplomacy, of increasing feebleness in domestic policy, and of a series of concessions to the Liberals which had the effect of exposing its own fatal weaknesses to the unfriendly eye of a critical and restless nation.

## VI

THE Italian War was the turning-point in the history of the Second Empire. Up to 1860 everything seemed to have succeeded with the man who twelve years before could not boast of fifty acquaintances in France. But now the sky was overcast. The Emperor had wished to drive the Austrians out of Italy, and the white-coats were still encamped in Venice ; he had striven to prevent the absorption of the central Italian states in the Piedmontese monarchy, only to find that his efforts were powerless. It was in vain that he had tried to prevent Garibaldi from quitting Sicily, in vain that a French fleet had been dispatched to the harbour of Gaeta to protect the Bourbon King of Naples ; Garibaldi had crossed the Straits of Messina, and the French sailors had been compelled to act as passive spectators during the last scene in the squalid tragedy of the Neapolitan Bourbons. Having obtained power with the aid of the Catholic suffrage, the Emperor of the French had posed as the protector of the Papal interests. All the Papal territory save the patrimony of St. Peter had been incorporated



in the new kingdom of Italy. It is true that a French force still guarded the city of Rome, but would a man whose diplomatic course had been marked by so many surrenders, refrain at the call of policy from making one more final surrender to the spirit of the Italian Revolution? The diplomacy of Napoleon had been woven without the knowledge and against the judgement of the men who were officially responsible for the conduct of French foreign affairs. It pleased nobody. In the eyes of the Radicals he had not gone far enough. In the eyes of the Clericals and Royalists he had gone much too far.

The decree of November 24, 1860, opened the floodgates of Parliamentary debate by permitting the discussion of the Address. Italy became at once the burning question of the day. 'To follow the discussions of the legislative body,' says Ollivier, the leader of the Opposition, 'one would believe there was no other question in the world but Italy.' The Liberals placed upon their programme the withdrawal of the French troops from Rome, and argued that Italy was the natural ally of France, that Italian unity should be accepted without apprehension or reserve, and that the necessary corollary of Italian unity was that Rome should be the political capital of the new kingdom.

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The Conservatives replied that the real ally of France was not Italy but Austria, that Italian unity had been effected by a course of cynical guile and broken faith and revolutionary violence. In the great and passionate discussions all the old hatreds of France blazed up again. It was a contest between the men of the French Revolution and the men of the Ancien Régime. 'We know you,' cried Jules Favre, the Radical barrister, to Keller, the eloquent champion of the Catholic cause; 'your fathers were at Quiberon, ours were at Waterloo'.

Meanwhile another question had arisen, which proved to be fraught with great calamity to the Empire. This was the question of Mexico. The idea of recovering in the Far West some part of the political influence which had been lost to France during the Seven Years' War had entered into the combinations of the Great Napoleon. Finding it necessary after the peace of Amiens to acquiesce, at least for a time, in the loss of Egypt, the First Consul had plotted a vast scheme of compensation on the other side of the Atlantic. A French expedition was sent to break the black power in San Domingo, Louisiana was acquired by purchase from Spain, and negotiations were begun with a view to the acquisition of the

Floridas. French officers began to gossip in the mess-room of an expedition up the Mississippi from St. Louis, and of how a French attack launched from the great lakes might drive the English out of Canada and undo the work of Chatham and Wolfe. All this scheming came to nothing, for war broke out on the Continent, and the waterways of the Atlantic were barred by the English navy. Louisiana was hastily sold to the United States, the negotiation for the Floridas was dropped, and the dream of a French empire in the West had to be indefinitely postponed.

The attention of Louis Bonaparte had been attracted to the Latin States of America by an offer of the presidentship of Ecuador, which reached him during his imprisonment in the fortress of Ham, and had stimulated the preparation of a pamphlet upon the advantages of a Nicaraguan canal. The scheme for a canal faded away, but the dream of opposing some barrier to the progress of Anglo-Saxon Protestantism in the western hemisphere continued to haunt Napoleon's mind ; and in the troubled condition of Mexico he discovered a pretext for intervention, a hope of aggrandizement, and a prospect of appeasing the Catholic resentments which had been stirred up by his recognition of the Kingdom of Italy.

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Mexico, after achieving its independence in 1821, had been the prey of chronic disturbance. It had waged an unsuccessful war with the United States in 1848, and in 1857 it was divided between two contending parties, one clerical and conservative, led by Miramon; the other anti-clerical and liberal, led by a very remarkable Indian, Benito Juarez. Juarez was sober, disinterested, incorruptible, but he had deeply offended the Catholic party by confiscating the property of the Church, by decreeing civil marriage, and by suppressing the religious congregations. There can be little doubt that he represented the will, not only of the six million Indians, who formed two-thirds of the Mexican population, but also of a considerable section of the more enlightened creoles. In Spain, however, and in France, it was represented by the envoys of Miramon, and in particular by a certain General Almonte, that Mexican society was monarchical in law and religion, in habits and ideas. It was pointed out with no little verisimilitude that a Latin country educated in the Spanish tradition could not in so short a space of time have discarded all the influences of her early training, and that while the object of Juarez was to assimilate Mexico to the United States, it was the aim of American

diplomacy to keep Mexico in a state of weakness, turbulence, and division, until the moment should have arrived when it might safely be brought under the Stars and Stripes. An opportunity had fortunately presented itself of spoiling the illegitimate ambitions of the Anglo-Saxon heretics. The Americans were involved in a civil war and would be powerless to interfere. It would be possible, therefore, to found in Mexico a Roman Catholic monarchy which should shield the interests of the Latin and Catholic world in the West from Teutonic aggression. Such a monarchy would protect Cuba, the Philippines, and the Antilles, would gratify the French and Italian Clericals, and maintain the balance of power in the world.

The Empress Eugénie was a Spaniard, and listened with willing ears to the romantic project. Visions of wonderful gold-mines in the wastes of the Sonora fired the brain of the poet Lamartine, and other men of baser clay, who were not poets, saw in the embarrassments of a feeble government the prospect of pecuniary advantage. A Swiss banker, by name Jecker, had speculated in the fortunes of Miramon by the advance of seven million francs at a usurious rate, and Morny, the Emperor's half-brother, was promised



thirty per cent. of the takings, if the French Government should help the foreign money-lender to wring his debt out of the *Mexicana*.

The financial embarrassments of the Mexican Government provided a reasonable pretext for interference. In September, 1860, a consignment of silver, chiefly the property of British subjects, was seized on its way to the coast by order of Juarez, and two months later a force under Miramon's direction appropriated some funds which were deposited in a warehouse belonging to the British Embassy. Both parties pleaded necessity, and each party protested that he would make repayment as soon as he had conquered the country. At the beginning of 1861 Juarez obtained a decisive victory over his opponent, but nevertheless repayment was not made. Faced by grave financial embarrassment, a Mexican congress in July, 1861, voted a law suspending for two years the payment of the foreign debt.

The country which was most concerned in the solvency of Mexico was England, and the English Government determined to take measures to protect the interest of its creditors. Accordingly, on October 3, 1861, a convention was signed in London between Great Britain, France, and Spain, by which it was arranged that contin-



gents should be sent to Mexico with instructions to occupy certain positions on the coast, to protect the foreign residents in the country and to enforce the just claims of the foreign creditors. The three Powers, in other words, had combined to concert a debt-collecting expedition to Mexico, and it would have been well for France if she had confined her energies to the collection of debts.

It soon became apparent that the three signatories to the convention were animated by divergent aims. England was prudent enough to recognize that it was not her business to make war in Mexico, to alter the form of the Mexican government, or to regenerate the morals of the Mexican people. She was aware that the United States of America entertained a strong objection to the political interference of European nations in the American continent, and she had no desire to challenge the attachment of the American people to the Monroe doctrine. Spain was more closely interested in the fate of Mexico, but jealous of France and unwilling to take a large military risk for a difficult and doubtful object. Napoleon alone was determined that the expedition should lead to the foundation of a Mexican Empire under French influence.

Mexico is a country of 750,000 square miles

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separated from France by 5,000 miles of ocean, and specially protected from hostile attack by a belt of malarious country lying between the ports of arrival and the highlands of the interior. To one who scanned the map there was clearly a prospect of much rude, perplexed, and scattered fighting, not to speak of wastage by disease, if the Mexicans should prove so perverse as to prefer material progress to the restoration of priestly control. The faintest exercise of political judgment should have informed Napoleon that his design would certainly encounter a firm resistance from America, and that its success would entirely depend upon the condition of the public mind in Mexico, as to which he was imperfectly informed. Considerations of prudence, however, weighed light in the balance against the magical policy out of which, as from a fairy hoard, an emperor was to be given to Mexico, a brilliant lustre to be conferred on French arms, a timely rebuff administered to the Yankee, and the Pope cured of his ill humour ; not to speak of those fabled gold-mines in the romantic wastes of the Sonora, and other little speculations which it is not necessary to enumerate. General Almonte was sent over to Mexico to prepare the way for a fresh revolution, and the appearance of this avowed monarchist in

the French camp was a sign that the Emperor was bent on hostilities. The commanders of the English and Spanish contingents refused to be accomplices in this new development of policy. They had been sent across the ocean to collect debts, not to overturn the political situation in Mexico. They had signed a convention with Juarez, had recognized his government, and they saw that the French pecuniary claims were framed to drive him not to solvency but to desperation. They withdrew their forces, leaving six thousand French troops to carry out a task the vast proportions of which were as yet but dimly discerned. In the boulevards of Paris the wits spoke of 'Duke Jecker's war'; and indeed there was something of high comedy in the suggestion that the governor of a state should be compelled to pay the bill for the guns and cartridges which had been used against him in a civil war. But there was little comedy in the heart of the affair. The opening event of the Mexican campaign was a resounding defeat of the hitherto unvanquished Imperial army. On May 4, 1861, a French force attacking the fortified town of Puebla was decimated by its Mexican defenders. It was the first note of warning, the Baylen of the Second Empire.

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The news of this catastrophe spurred Napoleon to fresh efforts. A force of 23,000 men was sent across the Atlantic, and a few brilliant actions resulted in the capture of Puebla and the city of Mexico. To sanguine minds it seemed as if the task was already half accomplished and success secure. A provisional government was set up with General Almonte at its head, and on July 10, 1863, an assembly of 215 Mexican notables, all of the proper political complexion, invited the Austrian archduke Maximilian to assume the Mexican Crown. The invitation was not spontaneous, and the choice of the Mexican Congress, like that of an English Chapter, was guided from above. Maximilian was the brother of Francis Joseph of Austria, and the husband of Charlotte, daughter of Leopold, King of the Belgians. He was tall and handsome, full of ambition and energy, and had earned the name of liberality as a proconsul in Lombardy while Milan was still an Austrian capital. In every respect he seemed to Napoleon to be the right man for Mexico, and to provide an unexpected and happy issue out of many European perplexities. The choice of a Habsburg prince would please the Catholic world, which had found in the French expeditions to China and Syria no adequate compensation for

the support which had been given to the sacrilegious government of Piedmont. The goodwill of England was valuable, and Maximilian's father-in-law was the trusted friend of Queen Victoria. Most important of all, the choice of a Habsburg archduke would tend to conciliate Austria, and Napoleon needed Austrian friendship. A plan was forming in his mind by which, in return for Eastern compensations, Venice might be ceded to the clamorous patriots of Italy.

From the very first the Mexican enterprise had aroused deep misgivings in the French Chamber. 'If we go to Mexico,' said Jubinal, a supporter of the Government, 'to impose a form of polity on an independent nation, what becomes of the grand principle of non-intervention? What right have we to attack a poor little people beyond the sea, among whom we seem to hear the distant echo of those principles which have founded our great nation?' It was pointed out that the cost of the expedition would far exceed the amount of the debt, and that Juarez did not refuse payment, but had merely asked for delay. A weighty warning came in March, 1862, from the general who had commanded the Spanish contingent. Prim assured Napoleon that he knew Mexico well, that there was very little monarchical sentiment in

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the country, and that although it would be easy to conduct Maximilian to the capital and to crown him emperor, he would find no support in the native population, and would be helpless as soon as the French army should leave the country.

This prediction was exactly realized. On his arrival in Mexico in May, 1864, Maximilian experienced nothing but a series of bitter disappointments. He had been told that the country was pacified ; he discovered that there were two centres of rebellion, one in the north under Juarez, another in the south under Porfirio Diaz, and that the French army, though brave and efficient, was unable to police more than a small area in the country. He had hoped to find administrative order, he discovered chaos and confusion. His treasury was empty, and until the last embers of resistance had burned themselves out it would be impossible to collect a sufficient revenue to meet the current expenditure. He was compelled, therefore, to live upon loans and subsidies from France, and to hope that in time his uncertain native troops might be drilled into an efficient army. Perceiving that the Clericals were incapable, and finding that the restoration of Church lands would add to the financial confusion of the country, he attempted to form a Liberal adminis-



tration. In so doing, he lost the support of the Church without obtaining the goodwill of the Liberal party. At last, in 1865, with the end of the American Civil War, France received the warning which any sound exercise of political forethought should have led her to expect from the first. She was informed in plain language from Washington that the French troops must be withdrawn. Napoleon replied that he was willing to evacuate the country if the Federal Government would consent to recognize Maximilian as Emperor of Mexico. The request was refused. Secretary Seward bluntly informed the French that they must quit the country and that the United States would never recognize a governor who had been imposed upon the people of Mexico against their will.

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Then came the final tragedy. The French troops embarked, and Maximilian, acting partly on the advice of Marshal Bazaine and partly on counsels from Vienna, determined to remain. He was alone, for his wife had left him to beg for aid among the European Courts. He had incurred the vehement hostility of the Republicans by an ill-judged enforcement of martial law, and was soon to discover the bitter truth which Bazaine had carefully shrouded from his eyes, that the

whole country was against him. At Queretaro, after standing a brief siege, he was betrayed into the hands of his enemies, condemned by court martial, and shot. His wife, the Empress Charlotte, had been spared the news of this calamity. Rebuffed by Napoleon, and learning that no help was to be expected from Belgium or from Austria, she lost the balance of her reason in the palace of the Vatican. She had gone to Rome to entreat the Pope to reconcile the Mexican clergy to the Empire; and in all history there is no more striking example of retribution than the collapse of this poor suppliant in the Vatican, a visible symbol of the tragical policy of unwisdom which the Vatican had commended and pursued. The Mexican catastrophe made a profound impression upon the mind of France. The country had squandered men and money upon a fantastic enterprise and had been ordered out of Mexico by the United States. She had invited a foreign prince to undertake an impossible task, and then, at the call of her own convenience, had left him to die like a dog. The speakers for the Government threw the blame of the disaster upon Marshal Bazaine, the French commander, who had represented that all was well, and by whose counsels Maximilian had waited behind; the

Opposition retorted that if Bazaine had been fully trusted the Empire of Mexico would have been saved. The name of this arrogant and stupid soldier became one of the war-cries of party, and among the misfortunes which followed from the Mexican expedition there was perhaps none graver than the spurious reputation which the rhetoric of the Opposition Press and of the Opposition deputies conferred upon the man whose treachery and ineptitude lost the great army of Metz in the Franco-Prussian war.

The Mexican adventure was not the only disaster which had befallen French diplomacy. It had been part of the Imperial tradition to sympathize with the cause of Polish nationality, and in 1831 Louis Napoleon had considered, and only under family directions consented to decline, a proposal to put himself at the head of the Polish rising. When, therefore, in 1863 the woes of Poland were again pressed upon the notice of the world, Napoleon felt bound to take strenuous action. 'I have changed my views on many points,' said he, 'but I think on Poland as I thought in 1831.' Feeling in Paris was deeply stirred. The Conservatives defended the Polish insurrection because it was led by nobles, the Catholics because it was favoured by priests, the Revolutionaries because

it was a Revolution. Nothing could have done more to retrieve the waning popularity of the Second Empire than a chivalrous war on behalf of Poland. Nor could anything be more calculated to damage its reputation than a failure to obtain from the Court of the Tsar any concessions to the Polish claims. Yet a war was quite out of the question. Neither England nor Austria was in the Quixotic mood, as the Tsar well knew, and France could not go into the quarrel single-handed. It was in vain that Napoleon attempted to bring moral pressure to bear upon Russia through the collective action of England, Austria, and France; that he imparted to Austria a scheme by which, in exchange for the cession of Galicia, she should receive Silesia from Prussia, who might be compensated by a serious reform of the German Confederation. He only earned the deep indignation of the Russian Emperor. Alexander intended to manage his own affairs, and had secured himself by a military convention signed with Prussia. A new man had risen above the horizon of European politics, a rough Pomeranian squire, who after serving in some diplomatic posts had now become the head of the Prussian Cabinet. The Russo-Prussian convention was the work of Otto von Bismarck, and the first of a long series of

diplomatic triumphs. It was a measure of far-reaching importance, for it secured Prussia from Muscovite interference during the great task which lay before her.

Napoleon had helped Italy to become a nation without apparently perceiving that another Power in Europe might wish to become a nation as well. Germany had not forgotten the War of Liberation in 1813, or the great national movement of 1848, when, by one of the chief calamities of modern history, she had failed to unify herself on liberal lines, largely owing to the refusal of the King of Prussia to accept the Imperial Crown from a parliament at Frankfort. But the movement towards national unity had only been temporarily checked. Bismarck, who in the wonderful year of revolutions had opposed the Pan-German Liberals because their scheme seemed to him to be fraught with danger to the Prussian monarchy, had learnt, as Prussian delegate to the Diet at Frankfort, that Austria must be eliminated from the German system, not by persuasion but by blood and iron. The movement must come not from the centre or the south, but from Prussia. It must be achieved not by talk but by deeds, not by ideals but by arms; it must be led by the Prussian monarchy; its instrument of success must be the Prussian army,



and its end the unification of the German State under Prussian control. It was first necessary to quarrel with Austria, and in the question of the duchies of Schleswig-Holstein Bismarck discovered the pretext for an Austrian war.

The French Emperor had no clear idea either of the significance of the Schleswig-Holstein question or of the drift of affairs in Germany. He believed that Prussia was his friend, and that in the event of a war between Prussia and Austria, France would be able to step in to rectify her own defective frontiers and to claim Venetia for Italy. Even should Prussia succeed in driving Austria from Germany and in founding a North German confederation, the balance of power would, in his judgement, have been readjusted in a manner favourable to France. Instead of one great federal State of 75,000,000 inhabitants, stretching from Roumania to the Rhine, he would be confronted with three States, one of which might be detached and bound to the chariot of France. Napoleon the First had made a Rhenish confederation and had experienced the loyalty of the South German States. His nephew, remembering this example, was impressed by the belief that a South German federation would lean upon the support of France. It was part of his philosophy of history

to anticipate the growth of large national aggregates, part of his fatalism to regard himself as an instrument designed by Providence to forward the process, part of his self-approval that, having adopted the principle of nationalities in Italy, he should continue to give it effect all over the world. When England pressed him to intervene on behalf of Denmark in the Schleswig-Holstein question, he answered with an uncertain sound. First he would not, then he would; ultimately he acquiesced in the Prussian triumph. To Italy, debating whether she should accept the proffered friendship of Prussia, he gave counsel that it would be well to arm. He saw nothing but profit to France in a joint attack of Prussia and Italy upon the house of Habsburg. 'The ghost of Venice,' to borrow the phrase of an Italian diplomat, 'was wandering about the corridors of the Tuileries.' Napoleon realized the difficulties which beset the young Italian kingdom; he knew that all the forward spirits in Italy, led by Garibaldi and Mazzini, were pressing forward for Venice and Rome. He saw that there would be no rest in the land till the tricolour waved over the lagoons, and with that curious vein of obstinate persistence which shot through all his many vacillations, he determined to help the young

Italian kingdom to obtain Venetia. He felt this course to be all the more incumbent upon him since he, a Catholic sovereign, could never concede upon the point of Rome. Yet some means must be found to settle the Roman question. Diplomacy discovered, not a remedy, but a palliative. A convention was struck with Italy in September, 1864, which arranged that the French troops should retire from Rome within two years, that the King of Italy should protect the Roman patrimony against republican incursions, and that the capital of the Italian kingdom should be removed from Turin to Florence, a pledge that it should not be moved further south still, and a sedative to Clerical nerves. The convention satisfied nobody. The Catholics cried out that the Pope was abandoned, the Republicans that the honour of Italy was sold, and both parties gathered themselves together to renew the strife. The Pope declined to recognize the convention, and issued a syllabus protesting against all the political ideas of nineteenth-century Liberalism. The Emperor prohibited the publication of the syllabus; the situation became more and more tense, both in Italy and in France; but if the Habsburgs could be made to cede Venice, then perchance the air might cool.

Bismarck saw the value of Italy. 'If Italy did not exist,' he said, 'it would be necessary to invent it.' He knew Napoleon, divined his cloudy ambitions, and in the October of 1865 came expressly to Biarritz to sound his mind and to secure his neutrality. With the frank, spontaneous charm which made him so dangerous an antagonist, the genial diplomatist unveiled in a series of informal conversations the seductions of the Prussian alliance. Prussia wanted to fortify her position in Germany at the expense of Austria. Of course, if France would permit her to do so, France should find it to her advantage. She might take Belgium, or a piece on the Rhine, or Luxemburg. *Suum cuique* was the device of the Hohenzollerns. Nothing was put upon paper; no pledges were exchanged. The French Foreign Minister mocked at the indiscretions of this Teutonic Gascon; but Bismarck saw that the seed sown from a full sack had fallen on fruitful soil. He knew that the Emperor was open to temptation, and that, as Piedmont had bought him with Savoy, so Prussia might buy him again with something else. All that Bismarck touched turned to gold. He gained the Italian Alliance, fended off Russia, forced on a war with Austria, and beat his antagonist in a campaign of seven weeks.

The wonderful victory of Sadowa fell like a thunderbolt on the political world in Paris. Napoleon had expected a long war, a hard war, a war which would exhaust all three combatants and result in an immense accession of strength to France. He had pictured himself intervening in a late stage of the hard-fought struggle with a kind of Olympian benevolence, and dictating the terms of a European peace. He would give Venice to Italy and wipe out the memories of Villa Franca and Chambéry; he would take Belgium or Luxemburg for himself, and thereby efface Waterloo and the humiliating treaties of 1815. He knew how well the Austrians had fought at Magenta and Solferino. Who could have thought that a single battle would place the whole empire of the Habsburgs at the feet of Prussia? The event was so sudden that it found him utterly unprepared. We should not blame him too severely. Prince Hohenlohe, the Bavarian statesman, was equally disconcerted in his prognostics.

One course promised success. If, while the Prussian armies were still in Bohemia, France should mobilize an army corps, she would be able in all probability to force Bismarck to accept her terms, and might obtain territorial compensation



to balance the augmented strength of Prussia and to pacify the jealous feeling at home. The question was debated in the Council, but Mexico had drained away men and money, and the Emperor, who was suffering from a painful attack of his distressing malady, allowed himself to be dissuaded from the energetic course. Instead of mobilizing an army, he sent an ambassador. He did enough to show Bismarck his ill-will, and too little to influence the terms of the treaty. The result of this mismanagement was, that while Prussia annexed all Germany north of the Main, and Venetia was ceded to Italy, France went empty-handed. A cry of rage and jealousy rose up in the country. 'It is France which has been conquered at Sadowa,' said Marshal Randon. 'It is a misfortune,' cried Thiers, 'such as France has not experienced for four hundred years.' The Opposition Press painted in sombre colours a France humiliated, powerless, and degraded, and even the most prudent of the Emperor's councillors advised that concessions should be made to the state of public feeling. 'National sentiment,' wrote Magne to Napoleon, July 20, 1866, 'would be profoundly wounded if at the end of the account France had obtained nothing from her intervention but to have attached to her flanks

two dangerous enemies with their power enormously increased.' It was on all hands admitted that a war would be impolitic, but even Prince Napoleon the Nationalist advised the search for compensations. It was expected that the gratitude of Prussia for the neutrality of France would come to the rescue of her embarrassed Government. No expectations could have been more futile, no worse advice could have been given or accepted. Compensations might be obtained in one way and in one way only, at the point of the sword. To seek them at all was, indeed, as Ollivier puts it, 'blasphemy against the principle of nationalities'; but in this desperate hour Napoleon was persuaded against his better judgement thus to blaspheme. First he asked for the Rhenish Palatinate and Hesse, then for Belgium, then for Luxemburg. The request for South German territory was communicated by Bismarck in 1870 to the public Press, and spread a wild feeling of indignation against the French. By an astute piece of diplomacy, Benedetti, the French Ambassador in Berlin, was persuaded to copy out in his own hand a draft secret treaty containing among other provisions the stipulation that France should be permitted to seize Belgium. The treaty was shown to the Bavarian Prime Minister in October,

1866, and quickened the conclusion of an offensive and defensive treaty between Bavaria and Prussia. Nor did this exhaust its utility. When war broke out in 1870, it was published to the world as evidence of the criminal ambitions of the French and with a view to turning the current of English feeling against the plotter in the Tuileries.

In the exasperated state of French opinion any spark might light a conflagration. Thiers had openly pronounced in the Sadowa debates that if Prussia crossed the Main, France should draw the sword to prevent the unity of Germany. A strong hand and a clear brain were needed to cope with the situation. Prussia had created her victorious army in the teeth of the popular Chamber and in defiance of constitutional forms, and what autocracy had done in Prussia autocracy might do in France. But in 1868 the power of Napoleon was neither autocratic nor uncontested. Ever since the first concessions of 1860, he had gone upon the principle of admitting the legislative chambers to a larger and larger share of influence in the government. In November, 1860, the Corps Legislatif was given the right to criticize the Imperial policy ; then in December, 1861, to discuss, and if necessary to reject, the items of

the budget ; then in January, 1867, the right of questioning the ministers who might be commissioned by the Emperor to take part in particular debates. In the following year many of the restrictions upon the Press were removed, and the Government became the object of much brilliant, coarse, and imaginative defamation. Meanwhile, the parliamentary opposition had steadily grown in strength. In the days of the autocracy five members alone, the representatives of Lyons and of Paris, had had the courage to oppose the Man of December. In 1863 the opposition numbered 35, in 1869 it had swollen to 100, and, despite all the Government pressure, had polled half the electorate of France. It was a bitter, passionate, jealous opposition. Part of it, led by Ollivier, believed in a future for the Liberal Empire ; part were determined to wreck the dynasty. All the young men of promise belonged to it, and all the leaders of the broken causes. It could count on the exuberant southern genius of Thiers, on the plausible and fluent oratory of Favre, on the acute and vigilant intelligence of Jules Simon. The Empire, indeed, had enlisted the service of some able men of the second class, notably Rouher, Billault, and Fould the Jew financier. But it is the Nemesis of despotism that it trains bureaucrats rather than

statesmen, and that young talent is not attracted to its service. Youth follows the magnet of the future, and the future appeared in the guise of Liberalism. The programme of the Liberals was seductive in its sweep and simplicity. They claimed liberty in its largest sense—liberty of elections, of public meetings, of the Press, of the municipalities, and the repeal of all exceptional legislation against personal freedom. They demanded that the popular Chamber should exercise a real control over the budget, that the legislature should be chosen by the people, and not by the prefects. In the end they obtained the substance of their desire, but long before the end came pure autocracy was a thing of the past. A request for fresh loans and for the sale of the state forests had been refused in 1865, and every item of military expenditure was jealously challenged. It may be urged that the Chamber had every right to be scrupulous. The Government had an unclean financial conscience. Millions had been poured out on the luxuries of the Imperial Court, on establishments for the Imperial relations, on bribing the Press and manipulating the elections and subsidizing the favourites. In 1868 Thiers showed that the Empire had incurred an annual floating debt of 270,000,000 francs, and Rouher



confessed that loans amounting to 450,000,000 francs had been secretly raised by the Government without consulting the legislature. A fit of financial nervousness seized the country, similar to that great paroxysm of anxiety which shook France from end to end in 1789. It was fatal to a grand scheme of military reform. In 1866 the Chambers threw out a plan for universal military service, and three years later they refused an appropriation for the *garde mobile*, and helped to compromise the success of the only scheme of army reform which was before the country. The plan was far from perfect; it made no improvements in armament and mobilization, but it was all that the military advisers of Napoleon had to offer, and if war was really regarded as a probable contingency the Government should have used every weapon in their armoury rather than permit any part of this plan to miscarry.

Meanwhile a new enemy had appeared upon the field. The Socialists had been crushed by the fusillades of 1848 and the great proscription of 1852; but so long as there is a sharp division between capital and labour, Socialism will continue to appeal to the working classes. The Empire bestowed great material benefits on France: it doubled the output of wealth, covered

the country with a network of railways, more than quintupled the steam force utilized by industry, and stimulated the application of scientific knowledge to industrial processes. In twenty years the number of patents taken out by inventors was doubled. But this rapid economic development was purchased by the concentration of capital, by the elimination of small businesses, and by much temporary displacement of labour as every department of industry in turn became invaded by machinery. Money wages rose, but there was a more than corresponding rise in house rents and in the prices of some of the staple articles of food. An intermittent explosion of strikes marked the sharp discord between the employer and his man, and the emergence of all the ugly problems which attend an industrial revolution. The discipline of the factory was proclaimed on the one hand to be tyrannical, on the other to be essential to the well-being of the business. To the workmen who demanded shorter hours the masters replied that the profit was made in the last few minutes. Large towns bred their peculiar problems, and the workshops of Lyons and Paris harboured, like the catacombs of Rome, a secret and proscribed religion. Socialism had its sacred books, its historical memories,

its martyrs who had wasted under the burning suns of an African exile. The pamphlets of '48 were thumbed and rethumbed in many a poor garret; the fiery exhortations of Proudhon found a place on the shelf with Blanc's more cogent plea for the organization of labour. By degrees, as their sentences expired—for of the twenty-six thousand proscripts of 1852 eighteen thousand were under forty—batches of exiles returned with rage and bitterness in their hearts. Whatever their fellow-workmen might desire, these men meant to overturn the despot who had broken their lives, and to take revenge on the men of the middle class who had mown them down at the barricades and grown fat upon their ruin. 'The vanquished of June,' said a writer in *L'Opinion Nationale*, a workmen's organ, of April 10, 1869, 'do not discuss with their murderers: they wait.' Hatred and need want no stronger preceptors, and the Socialism of the French working-classes was the result of economic facts rather than the consequence of any fine-spun theory. Still, behind all the debated questions there was a vague pervasive idea that the existence of a wage-earning proletariat was an offence against eternal justice which society must correct. Reforms, not in themselves incompatible with the continued insti-

tution of private property, such as the legalization of trade unions or the extension of credit facilities to co-operative societies, were claimed as steps towards 'a society founded on common right'. And for the more thoughtful leaders of the labouring class a new outlook and a fresh assurance of success was afforded by a doctrine which came from Germany, hammered with the hard steel of German science. The prophets of the new Socialism were Karl Marx and Ferdinand Lassalle. Obeying the main intellectual current of their age, and working on the poignant experience afforded by capitalistic production, these two Jewish writers discovered in the tendencies of history a preceptive philosophy and a practical programme. The Revolution of 1789 had broken the ascendancy of the feudal aristocracy, and led to the triumph of the middle class, the owner of capital and the exploiter of labour. For these, too, an inexorable fate was preparing an inevitable doom. It was an iron law of wages that while interest and profit steadily swelled the remuneration of labour was kept about subsistence point. By an automatic social process the accumulation of capital becomes concentrated into fewer and fewer hands, and the number of men and women ground down to a bare level of subsistence

waxes greater and greater. Nature, however, after her mysterious fashion, was working out the remedy for the ills which she so mysteriously creates. An awful zigzag of lightning would suddenly reveal the hideous outline of the sombre, storm-laden landscape. The toilers in their millions would rise, shake off the incubus, and appropriate to the use of humanity the land and the instruments of production. Humanity would enter into its own, the war of classes would cease, and the slave-drivers of the factory would perish of their own suicidal egoism. These fatalistic doctrines, shorn of their scientific apparatus, and with many pitiless and savage corollaries, swiftly sped through the leaders of the labour movement. In 1864 an International Association of workmen had been organized in England, and this body soon fell under the influence of the new Socialism. 'The country,' said Ollivier, 'is calm on the surface, but below, in every mind, there is a mysterious anxiety. By degrees an impression is penetrating through the masses that we are traversing a dangerous crisis and that the Empire is going to its doom.' Prosper Mérimée shared the same impression. 'We are ill,' he wrote; 'we are not governed. The prefects receive no direction.'



In 1869 things seemed to be pointing to the dissolution of the Empire. The Emperor, the Empress, the Court, and the ministers, were the object of incessant attacks from the half-liberated Press. Henri Rochefort published a little red paper called *La Lanterne* which sold like wild-fire on the boulevards of Paris, for its impudent and brilliant scurrility. A young orator from the South, Léon Gambetta, threw a wild defiance at the crime of December in the course of a political trial, and became the popular hero of France. It was a strange moment, in face of the rising tide of Socialism, the open disaffection of Paris, and the heavy Government losses in the elections of 1869, to select for further concessions to the Opposition. But Napoleon was ill and weary, and not unwilling to devolve some of his responsibilities. In response to a demand coming from 116 deputies he agreed to submit to the Senate a measure for the revision of the Constitution. He proposed to establish a responsible ministry still depending on the Emperor but subject to impeachment by the Senate, and to give to both branches of the legislature enlarged powers over legislation and finance. These constitutional proposals were placed before the people. 'The Empire,' so ran the ministerial circular, 'addresses a solemn appeal to

the nation. In 1852 it asked for power to secure order. It now asks in 1870 for power to establish liberty.' Seven million votes testified the assent of France to the Liberal Empire, and there are some who still believe that, but for the momentary aberration of judgement which led to the Franco-Prussian war, the principle of Liberalism might have saved the Empire of Napoleon.<sup>1</sup> There is some reason to question this decision. A government is only strong if it adheres to its guiding principle. The guiding principle of Bonapartism was autocracy founded on popular consent, safeguarding social order and social equality. An autocrat does not easily abdicate to a parliamentary ministry, does not easily adapt himself to the delicate mechanism of constitutional forms. And in France, though there was still no little personal attachment to Napoleon, the faith in the Empire had declined. Who could be enthusiastic for a government with such a record of humiliation and failure? Could the Liberals forgive the harsh tyranny of the earlier years? Could they trust a nephew of Napoleon to unlearn the traditions of his house? Could they believe that the interests of Liberalism would be safe in the hands of a

<sup>1</sup> The thesis is well argued by Henri Berton, *L'Évolution constitutionnelle du Second Empire*, Paris, 1900.

regency controlled by the Empress and her ultramontane camarilla? Could they forget that France had been cheated out of her Republic in 1793 by foreign war, in 1814 by alien Powers, in 1830 by the adroit manipulation of the Orleanist faction? The Empress at least was under no delusion. She saw that the dynasty depended on prestige, and that its prestige required to be refreshed; and whether or no it be true that Bismarck determined to force on a war with France in the summer of 1870, she and her party were eager for the fray. They believed that a war would save the dynasty, and that a war alone could save it. And perhaps some justification is afforded for this opinion by the fact that when the news of Sedan was telegraphed to Paris the Empire fell suddenly, without noise, without a hand to help it, or a voice raised in its defence.

It was one of Benjamin Constant's wise maxims that a constitutional monarchy differs from a republic in form, but from an absolute monarchy in substance. The *plébiscite* of May 8, 1870, by ratifying the transformation of the absolute Empire into a constitutional monarchy had effected a fundamental change in the government of France. A people endowed with universal suffrage, parliamentary institutions, and an executive responsible

to the legislature, possesses all the substance of sovereignty. Republican institutions cannot add to its power, and may easily abridge its liberties. If man were a creature of reason, if names were not as potent as things, if bloodshed had no power to create or rancour to prolong the spirit of political partisanship, the Republicans might in time have been brought to accept the Liberal Empire. Those who regret its disappearance believe that it would have rallied at least the larger and more moderate section of the party, and would in the end have healed the social wounds which had been kept open by ninety years of political unrest. They see the impassable gulf which now divides the Royalists from the Republic, and argue that the Liberal Empire would have offered political shelter to Royalists and Republicans alike. Reft of its autocratic significance, Bonapartism would have come to represent the great central party of common sense and prudent compromise. It would have retained the loyalty of the Church while keeping at arm's length the pretensions of the Vatican ; it would have provided careers for turbulent ambition, and destroyed the revolution by the gradual process of absorbing it. Time alone was wanting, as to the uncle, so to the nephew ; but Time, acting through Wellington and Moltke,

would not wait for the political consolidation of France, and the Liberal Empire which was to reconcile all antagonisms was twice shattered before it could mould a tradition and while its healing potencies were yet unrealized. The collapse of the audacious compromise, twice repeated, left the nation with all its old hostilities unappeased. The Church fell away from the State. Was not Darboy, that Archbishop of Paris who was murdered in the Commune, the last of the Gallican prelates ?

The prophetic ghosts of history may be examined, but we cannot lay them. In our view Bonapartism was a spent force before Count Bismarck changed the Ems telegram. It had done its work, and France will never call upon it to do work again. The Second Empire was accepted because it offered an escape from anarchy and socialism, because it stood for social equality, vigorous, efficient government, a courageous outlook on the world, and the ascendancy of a dazzling name. But these foundations had crumbled away during the eighteen years of chequered fortune which succeeded the *Coup d'État*. The memory of the days of June had grown dim ; vacillation and failure had marked the conduct of public affairs ; the name of Bonaparte had lost its



magic even in the barracks. The *plébiscite* of May 8 served to show that, though the peasant vote remained solid, the larger towns were breaking away from the Empire. Yet when the telegrams flowed in to the Tuileries at the end of that anxious day, a keen spasm of relief shot through the Court at the greatness of the majority. It seemed as if the Empire had refreshed its credentials and was started on a new term of certificated power. Cool analysis would have shown how uncertain was the ground for confidence. The vote was taken upon the latest phase of Imperial policy, not upon the cardinal issue of the continued existence of the dynasty. Some cast their votes for Napoleon out of hatred for the autocracy which he proposed to discard ; others because fear of revolution outbalanced disaffection to the Empire ; others again, in the hopes that the blasts of freedom might bring the Imperial fabric to the ground. The pessimists, remembering some Imperial utterances during the Hundred Days, believed that a Napoleon could never be loyal to free institutions, and that a successful war would end the liberties of France. The war came, bringing with it not success but such revelations of incompetence and such crushing disasters as have never been equalled in modern history.

In every department of public affairs the Government was shown to be a hollow sham. Its diplomacy was a tissue of miscalculations, for it precipitated a conflict with Prussia when a few weeks' delay might have procured the Austrian alliance ; its military preparation was inadequate and confused ; its plan of campaign based upon a grave misapprehension of the leading military and political conditions. Such defects do not condemn France. They show that the Government had failed to enlist the intelligence or to discipline the labours of a brilliant and energetic nation. The Second Empire, for all its widely advertised beneficence, was no school of public morality, and the heritage of hopes and beliefs which had made its fortunate youth was squandered in the Franco-Prussian war beyond retrieve. Bonapartism can never stand again as the symbol of science and energy in affairs, still less as the talisman of victory ; for though Frenchmen, in speaking of the Bonapartes, may remember the glories of Lodi and Marengo, they do not forget the disaster of Sedan, the shame of Metz, or the loss of Alsace-Lorraine.











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